

EXAMINING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF AN ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT PROJECT: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN  
PARTICIPANTS IN TEYA-TEYANENG CRAFT PROJECTS OF  
BEREA DISTRICT

BY

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# DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, ....., declare that

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Signed

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my dearly loved son Karabelo who sacrificed to have his mother away for so long. I thank you my son.

I also dedicate this to the memory of my late mother 'Me 'Mapeete Augustina Makoko, whose wisdom and efforts have inspired me up-to-date. You have been a loyal friend who went the extra mile to share your life selflessly. I therefore, appreciate it all mum, and may your soul rest in peace.

## **Abstract**

In the UNDP Report of 2008, promotion of gender equality and women empowerment, Millennium Development Goal (MDG3), has been declared not only as the main developmental objective but also a fundamental mode of attaining the entire MDGs. This study examines women's experiences of economic empowerment projects in the era of escalating female household heading and relentless poverty in Lesotho. It particularly focuses on women participating in crafts projects initiated for income generation, in the context of gendered spaces. A growing body of literature asserts that Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) is a potential route out of abject poverty, especially for the economically marginalised women in Female-Headed Households (FHH).

A case study focusing on women participants in Teya-teyaneng crafts of Berea district in Lesotho was carried out. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore the potential of participation to yield positively for empowerment in the scenario of informal economy. Findings from the two units within the single case utilised revealed that empowerment remains to be one of the entangled processes of economic development. It is highly subjected to social, political and economic procedures operating in a country. The study further revealed that economic empowerment of women participating in income generating projects is considerably constrained by the patriarchal and globalised economic set ups that women operate within. The case of Elelloang Basali illuminated that adherence to contemporary strategies of economic empowerment is a beneficial ingredient, contrary to the operations of Setsoto Design.

Recommendations ultimately forwarded highlight the significance of macro-economic policy to pay attention to the assertion that WEE is not merely a path out of poverty but an intrinsic entity of employment-led-growth. This also hints on policy for broad-based growth that can be countercyclical for the economy of the country. The paper serves to articulate a dire need for shift from reluctance to responsiveness for those with political and economic will power.

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## **Glossary and abbreviations**

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AMR- Adult Mortality Rate

BEDCO- Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation

BOS- Bureau of Statistics

CARE- Corporative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere

DFID- Department for International Development

Elelloang Basali- Be Aware Women

EPZs- Export Processing Zones

FHH- Female Headed Household

GAD- Gender and Development

GDI- Gender Development Index

GEM- Gender Empowerment Measurement

GII- Gender Inequality Index

HHS- Household Size

Hatooa Mose Mosali- Women should be up to do empowering work

HDI- Human Development Index

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IGP- Income Generating Projects

IHDI- Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index

ILFS- Integrated Labour Force Survey

IMR- Infant Mortality Rate

KZN- KwaZulu-Natal

LDCs- Least Developed Countries

LED- Local Economic Development

MDGs- Millennium Development Goals

MHH- Male Headed Household

MTEC- Ministry of Tourism Environment and Culture

MTICM- Ministry of Trade, Industry Cooperatives and Marketing

RSA- Republic of South Africa

SACU- Southern African Customs Union

SADC- Southern African Development Community

Setsoto Design- Designs of Admiration

SEWA- Self Employed Women Association

SLA- Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

TFT- Total Fertility Rate

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

UNIFEM- United Nations Development for Women

WAD- Women and Development

WCED- World Commission on Environment and Development

WEE- Women Economic Empowerment

WFP- World Food Programme

WID- Women in Development

WIEGO- Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and problem statement

Global economic systems have over time engendered additional opportunities for men to be empowered at the expense of women. This has been signaled by the relentless masculinity in many economic processes as observed in recent decades. Women often received attention as mothers and as one of the vulnerable factions of the populace. Programmes aimed at development were often meant for addressing immediate poverty but not their empowerment (Karl, 1995).

It is in this context that the study affirms that the potential of women to contribute positively to economic development in Lesotho has often been ignored. One way of unleashing this potential is by striving for women's economic empowerment through their participation in income-generating projects. This has been partly explored in the advent of Gender and Development (GAD) which evolved from Women and Development (WAD) and Women in Development (WID) as Malhotra (2004) posits. The research explores how the issues of women empowerment, and in particular the economic empowerment of women, are understood and operationalised by actors in development programmes and to what effect.

Notions of empowerment in development are not without controversy as there are often different perspectives as to what constitutes empowerment. There is also a risk that overly subjective measures provide little in the way of meaningful evidence. Economic empowerment provides incentives to change the patterns of traditional behaviour to which a woman is bound as a dependent member of the household. It is in this context that New Zealand International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID) asserts that:

While empowerment often comes from within and individuals empower themselves, cultures, societies, institutions and individuals can create conditions which facilitate or undermine the possibilities of empowerment. The empowerment of women is an essential precondition for the elimination of poverty and hunger, the full realization of human rights and the achievement of sustainable development (NZAID, 2007: 24).

Gender impartiality and empowered women are mechanisms for proliferating development attempts. It is in this context that literature argues that investment in gender parity has a multiplier effect in comparison to other development investments. Nonetheless, it has been documented that Women Economic Empowerment (WEE), convincing as it might be, cannot be solely relied upon for poverty reduction and economic development (GENDERNET, 2011).

Economic empowerment projects have income generation as their main focus because they provide women with the opportunities to create their proceeds autonomously. Income-generating activities are said to be efficient ways for tackling disparities in social capital and poverty reduction which can be enhanced through increased household earnings and management by women over economic resources (Hashemi, 2004 in UNFPA, 2007). Women in destitution can be empowered partly by earning adequately as this can impact positively on their lives. WEE can be a tool for curtailing intergenerational poverty.

### **1.1.1 Global gender gap and economic disempowerment of women**

According to APF (2007) closure of gender gap has not materialised even in most developed countries. At global level, for instance, women earn less than 78 percent of the wages that men earn for the similar work, and trade liberalization is also aggravating existent disparity. International perspective indicates that women are poorer than men, especially in the developing countries where Female Headed Households (FHH) comprises 25 to 35 percent of all households (Arku and Arku, 2011). More than 70 percent of the global population in dire destitution is women; therefore, deteriorating inequality at international level implies waning gender equality. This is exacerbated by the fact that women worldwide own less than 3 percent of the land resources (APF, 2007). Access to economic resources is a key to gender equality, women empowerment and poverty reduction.

### **1.1.2 Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) in Africa**

The poorest of the poor in Africa are women, and APF (2007) indicates that the gendered poverty is resultant of social inequalities that women face. Gender gap at continental level has been complicated by the cultural context existent in most of patriarchal societies of Africa. Culture and traditional practices have placed economic, social and political powers in the hands of men to the detriment of women. This has resulted in women having their economic rights,

access to resources and economic prospects constrained. Women own less than 1 percent of the landmass of this continent and their workday is 50 percent longer than that of their male counterparts due to additional performance of unpaid work. Limited educational and employment opportunities for women reduce per capita growth by 0.8 percent per annum (ibid.). These and other related facts qualify WEE in Africa for gender equality and poverty reduction.

### **1.1.3 WEE in Lesotho**

Lesotho is one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the Sub Saharan African region, with the total area of 30, 355km<sup>2</sup>. Lesotho is entirely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa (R.S.A) and it is a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The country is mountainous with most of its land being 1, 800 meters above sea level with the population of 1, 876, 633 (BOS, 2006). Rugged topography coupled with pervasive drought has to some degree complicated agricultural production which the economy depends on. Its economy is also dependent on textile exports, royalties from water projects, remittances from South African mines, South African Customs Union (SACU) revenue, diamonds sales and wool and mohair craft exports (Kamaleri and Eide, 2011). According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2009), the country ranked 156<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI).

Dependence of the economy on that of South Africa renders Lesotho's economy vulnerable to volatility that the South African economy faces. Trade liberalization has also managed to expose the country to external shocks from the global economy, further undermining efforts to curb poverty and inequality (ADB/ADF, 2008). Furthermore, in the advent of diminishing revenue from SACU and remittances from South African mines, the country's fiscal policy that is characterized by recurrent expenditure has become unsustainable, hence a need for reform that can encourage medium-term growth as Masenyetse and Motelle (2012) assert. A need to consider this is substantiated by alarming 23.2 percent HIV/AIDS rate and a 25.3 percent unemployment rate in the country (ILFS, 2008), not to mention the persistence of gendered poverty and inequality. These and other factors remain a challenge to the country's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7.2 percent in 2006 and 4.9 percent in 2007 (ADF/ADB, 2008).

The country is a constitutional monarch that is divided into 10 administrative districts. Eighty percent of the population is located in the rural areas while the other 20 percent resides in the urban areas. It is further divided into four geographical regions, namely: mountains, foothills, Senqu river valley and the lowlands (Tsosane, 2010). The craft projects for the case study are in Teya-teyaneng town of Berea district. The district is located forty kilometers north of Maseru, the capital town of Lesotho. This district has been the focus for the development, through programmes of a number of craft weaving centres which were geared primarily towards the enhancement of incomes for women in destitution.

Women in Lesotho, like elsewhere, have been disempowered socially, politically and economically; hence a need for transformation. Conversely, the study has been reinforced by the claim that "...prevailing gender disparities in Lesotho are a real obstacle to the effective participation of women in the socio-economic and political development of the country" (MDG, 2008: 20). The pervasiveness of gender bias is apparent despite the government's effort to adopt among others a Gender and Development Policy (Matashane-Marite; 2005: 3). Based on this it can be asserted that women, when given an opportunity to participate in the economy, can contribute effectively to accelerate economic growth and development, be it at micro or macro level (Todaro and Smith, 2009).

The effects of ignoring perpetuation of gender bias and economic disempowerment of women in Lesotho manifested in the (HDI) that plummeted, more in the 4 out of 10 districts of Lesotho, including Berea (MDG, 2008). Unemployment rate, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Adult Mortality Rate (AMR) are high, as well as the levels of malnutrition and all these exacerbate challenges of HIV/AIDS and gendered poverty prevalent in this country (ibid.). The World Food Programme (WFP) (2011) report accentuates this by indicating that of the four districts, Berea with 44 percent has the highest percentage of Female Headed Households (FHH). The district also has the highest percentage of 54 of household heads with incomplete primary education, hence rendering them incapable of possessing satisfactory income generation prospects.

The most recent response to this predicament is that of the UNDP in the joint programme under one UN process. The intention is that of initiating Local Economic Development (LED) projects and assessment of value chains in production for women and youth in those four districts of Lesotho (BEDCO, 2010). Perhaps, this coupled with the contemporary initiation of Inequality-

adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)<sup>1</sup> and Gender Inequality Index (GII)<sup>2</sup> (UNDP Lesotho, 2011), will aid in revealing realities about deeply-rooted gender inequality that impede women empowerment in Lesotho, masked by HDI, Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Index (GEI). It is further stated that the GII value of 0.532 ranked Lesotho 108 out of 146 countries in the 2011 index.

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

At the heart of this research activity is an approach to understand how women participants in Teya-teyaneng craft projects of Berea district in Lesotho see issues of empowerment, with an emphasis on economic dimensions of this empowerment. The research questions outlined below are therefore directed towards a process of gaining insights based on the actual experiences of women and their interpretation of these factors influencing these experiences.

### **1.2.1 Primary objective**

To examine the women's perspectives on empowerment associated with their experience of participation in Teya-teyaneng craft projects of Berea, and to compare this with stated project goals and wider debates on women's economic empowerment.

### **1.2.2 Secondary objectives**

To find out ways in which women have participated in income generating projects.

To explore factors that influence women's participation and non-participation in income generating projects.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2010 HDR introduced IHDI to take into account inequality in all dimensions of HDI by discounting its average value according to its level of inequality. The HDI can be viewed as an index of potential human development and IHDI as an index of actual human development. The loss in potential human development due to inequality is given by the difference between HDI and IHDI, and can be expressed as a percentage (UNDP Lesotho, 2011: 3).

<sup>2</sup> GII reflects gender-based inequalities in the three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. GII replaced GEI and GEM. GII shows the loss in human development due to inequalities between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions (UNDP Lesotho, 2011: 4).

### **1.3 Research questions**

What is the development status of women in Lesotho?

In what ways have women participated in income generating projects in the country?

What factors influence women participation in income generating projects in Lesotho?

What do those designing and implementing projects understand by economic empowerment of women?

What do women associated with the projects understand economic empowerment to mean to them?

How do those designing and implementing the projects understand about how the project has impacted on the empowerment of women participating in the projects?

How do those women associated with the projects understand how the project has impacted on the empowerment of women participating in the projects?

What could be learnt for future policy from these experiences?

### **1.4 Structure of the study**

The study comprises of seven chapters and some appendices. Chapter one provides the background and statement of the problem. Significant literature is reviewed in chapter two together with the theoretical framework. This is for comprehension of women's experiences of economic empowerment internationally and in Lesotho. Chapter three presents methodology utilised in this study. This covers population sampling, selection, procedures followed throughout data collection and the entire research. Additionally, it gives details of data analysis coupled with the restrictions of the study with reflections on issues that were engendered by the entire research process. Chapter four contextualizes the craft projects for the case study. Findings of this research are presented in chapter five. Chapter six serves to provide analysis of data collected. Conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented in chapter seven.

## **1.5 Terms of gender and empowerment**

**Sex** - refers to the biological differences between men and women and sex roles common internationally.

**Gender** - conveys the social relations between men and women, boys and girls and how these are constructed by societies. These roles are not consistent and are modified by individual societies from time to time.

**Gender roles** - refer to the conducts that are learned in individual societies for habituation of actions that are assumed to be appropriate for women and for men. Gender roles for women range from the reproductive, productive and community managing roles.

**Gender mainstreaming** - is the process of making certain that women and men have equivalent access and power over resources, benefits of overall growth and decision-making at all phases of the development course.

**Gender inequality** - is resultant of imbalance or bias on the basis of the individual's sex in prospects and the allotment of wherewithal or benefits or access to services.

Source: UNDP-Lesotho (2008).

**Poverty** - refers to the deprivation in terms of a range of capabilities in addition to income, education, health, human and civil rights, all of which can inhibit economic growth.

Source: Hulme and Shepherd (2003).

**Household** - is used here to mean a group of people that dwell in the same shelter most of the time and share monetary and non-monetary resources for their livelihoods. It is taken into consideration that resources are generated by household members through their engagement in various activities.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a review of essential literature as well as an overview of theoretical concepts that might have application to the analysis. In the material that follows, the multi-faceted notion of empowerment is initially explored, specifically its conceptualisation in a range of literature in relation to its opposite, namely disempowerment. Furthermore, the chapter proceeds to discuss women's economic empowerment (WEE) as a concept of interest for various fields of study, inclusive of development studies. Special attention is to be given to women's experiences of economic empowerment projects, particularly to women participants in the informal sector, like craft projects that aim at generating income.

The discussion further pays attention to participation, as it is highly related to empowerment, though not necessarily mutually reinforcing. The other crucial part of this chapter is to discuss craft weaving in relation to economic empowerment of women. The global perspective of economic empowerment, development and poverty reduction is highlighted in this chapter so to narrow down the scope to the situation of the study in hand. The exploration of Gender and Development approach (GAD) theoretically serves to guide the study as its aspects are closely related to WEE. Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) which was instigated by sustainable development, coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, complements GAD in this study. Therefore, without touching on how livelihoods relate to crafts weaving, the study would be incomplete.

### **2.2 Empowerment**

Empowerment is a highly contentious concept with various meanings for diverse institutions. Nonetheless, such a range of definitions possess some commonalities and limited variations. It is generally related to "...agency, autonomy, self-direction, self-determination, liberation, participation, mobilization and self-confidence" (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007: 6). Generally, both men and women have to take control of their lives, however, women, more than men, lament for empowerment for the reason that patriarchal societies have rendered them to be disempowered subordinates. What is noteworthy about empowerment as African Development Forum (ADF, 2008) asserts, is that no one is to be empowered by another person; nevertheless, a number of

organisations can support procedures that foster self-empowerment of consigned persons or factions.

In the effort to conceptualise it, Kabeer (1999) acknowledges that structures sketch out resources, agency and achievements of a being. Empowerment, according to Alsop and Heinsohn (2005), is an ongoing process and also an outcome that can augment the capability of an individual or a faction to make choices and turn them into outcomes. Empowerment is understood by Kabeer (1999: 437) to be highly related to disempowerment, and refers to the “...process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability”. Kabeer (2001) posits that empowerment is a convoluted process that changes over time, thus complicating its measurement by existing indicators.

Empowerment, it is suggested, can lead to a better sense of worth often through joint action, with the aim of among other things, economic improvement mainly for those at the grassroots level (Karlekar, 2004). Additionally, Karlekar shows that empowerment focuses on the role of shared management. Basically, empowerment efforts are geared towards thwarting social exclusion and marginalisation. Bennett (2002) in Malhotra *et al.* (2002) has a framework that relates empowerment and social inclusion and thus describing empowerment as the improvement of assets and capabilities of individuals or those in organisations.

Assets and capabilities of the destitute are regularly vital in assisting them to counteract the limitations of subjection and voicelessness as Narayan (2005) asserts. These are the attributes that the poor can employ for transition out of disempowerment bondage. For empowerment to be significant, capacity building has to instill the proficiency of sharing the roles and willingness to participate among the newly privileged (*ibid.*). It is in this regard that the interwoven nature of participation and empowerment is exhibited, hence acknowledging the complexity of disconnecting them.

### **2.2.1 Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)**

The reason that women empowerment is not only controversial but also subjective, has been a motive enough for the research to interrogate women’s experiences of economic empowerment so as to be in a position to relate theoretical and concrete perspectives of the phenomenon. Historically, economic roles of women have been ignored in societies and by development

initiatives. In 1970 Boserup initially led the illumination endeavour pertaining to the notion of economic empowerment of women (Boserup, 1986).

Mehra (1997) highlights that colonialism with the introduction of cash cropping benefited men to the detriment of women, as men and not women were introduced to contemporary agricultural expertise that enhanced high yields. These and other issues informed the first international conference on women in Mexico in 1975 which focused on the awareness of the fact that development policies had overlooked women's economic positions and that they were ignored in the development process.

In attempting to explain women empowerment, colossal literature revolves around similar conceptualisations that emphasise the expansion of people's capabilities and ability to make choice so to redress inequality (Kabeer, 2001; Alsop, 2006; Chambers, 1993; Moser, 2003; Narayan, 2005; UNIFEM cited in Mosedale, 2005; Lokshin & Ravallion, 2003 cited in Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). It is further stated that some descriptions of women empowerment go beyond the focal point of agency, for instance, Vygotskian scholars view women's empowerment as the improvement of self-awareness, knowledge, judgment, thoughts, and even reactions, and the pursuit of a satisfactory life through association with the rest of the people as adopted by Swai (2010).

WEE is a multi-faceted process which interconnects the individual's family, societal, financial and political aspects (Swain and Wallentin, 2008). This can increase the power of individual women to make choices in life, which is what they have been denied by their patriarchal societies. This qualifies the rationale for reassurance of women inclusion through their participation in projects that are initiated with the motive of empowering them. WEE can be attained by directly focusing on the extension of women's economic prospects, legal rights and the right to be heard, partaking in economic decision-making (UNDP, 2008).

WEE, like various contemporary notions of economic development, can be contextualised as it has not yet acquired a clear definition. It has at its heart, the improvement of gender relations which can potentially yield positively for women. An environment with gender impartiality enhances women's rights of acquisition and use of requisite property (DTI, 2011). This is

because access and allocation of resources improve the chances for WEE attainment, while dependence of women on income from men restrains their opportunity to be empowered.

Conversely, the use of empowerment in relation to projects that focus on ensuring that prospects of income generation for women are widened can be totally misleading. "...the true meaning of empowerment – transforming unequal gender power relations – is forgotten, and patriarchy is not challenged" (Endeley, 2001: 39). This serves to highlight the complexities of women empowerment which need not be ignored if deception is to be circumvented. It is further stated that if women are to earn money from these projects but they have little or no control over it, or their status is not improved, then men continuously benefit from this subordinate economic relations (ibid.).

Arguments on intra-household gender relations advanced by Amartya Sen are used by Pearson (2007: 207) to elucidate that the potential of women to earn does not merely translate into empowerment. It also enables one to interrogate the degree to which empowerment of women can be comprehended in separation from family and societal relations. Alternatively, it emphasises the ways in which receiving income may broaden opportunities for women, although that may also amplify their amount of work and errands short of automatically growing their autonomy (ibid.). The notion of women's empowerment also incorporates both lessening and broadening their options and women's liberty, and "...homogenizing and pluralizing their subjectivities" (Swai, 2010: 170). It is crucial not to perceive the concept in an exclusively pessimistic manner.

### **2.2.2 Restrictions of WEE**

Majority of factors that hinder women empowerment in Africa are economically inclined as Ravinder and Narayana (2007) posit. One of these from the supply side is access to land and allocation of property as women are rarely allowed to become land owners or have the right to allocate such a resource. Societies have made men or boy children to be in authority of land and accompanying physical property regardless of what individual women contribute economically to the household. Labour intensification for production and sustenance in Lesotho was to the detriment of women as a lot of men migrated to work in South Africa. However, it remains

puzzling as to why there has never been a shift in labour provision in the advent of mine workers retrenchment, especially in rural areas where subsistence farming dominates.

The demand side indicates lack of requisite level of education and skills that obscure the efforts of women empowerment. This is mirrored by the inequalities in access and provision though the measures of the gender gap closure in education, which have been dependent on biased gender analysis (Kabeer, 2003). It is further stated that educated women are more likely to seek contraception and maternal health services as opposed to those with no education. Shortage of skills puts women in the informal economy where they are insecure due to its precarious nature (SADC, 2005). Moreover, women mostly in the remote areas cannot produce collateral that is requisite by financing institutions for accessing credit, making women resort to informal financing institutions (ibid.).

### **2.3 Participation**

According to Cornwall and Edwards (2010) participation is essential for empowerment especially if the decisions are to affect the lives of, for instance, women. However, diligence is a requisite in the enforcement of participation, therefore, the ladder of citizen participation as purported by Arnstein (1969), serves to furnish us with the typologies of participation. Drawing on this approach it can be argued that it is of fundamental importance for women who have been disempowered to transit from the non-participation level or tokenism, to the level with a degree of citizen power. It is significant for any development project especially at grassroots level to grant requisite attention to women exclusively. Failure to do this might lead to an unconscious deprivation of the vulnerable factions of the society who are the beneficiaries of successful projects run by women.

It has been argued that participation does not necessarily yield empowerment, however, Beneria (2003) purports that remunerated employment has a tendency to boost the autonomy of women and their bargaining power, thus justifying participation in the projects. Generally, the marginalizing experiences of women reinforced the evolution of an approach to address them. Various strategies have therefore been put together in the GAD approach to make it possible for women to empower themselves through participation in the mainstream economics. This has contributed towards amplified cooperation and harmonisation, hence successful team work (Karl,

1995). Karl (1995) asserts that their participation does not merely imply the increment of their numbers or involvement in the projects, but instead it is a way of empowering them and shaping policies. Participation as a product is elementary to sustainability as it is linked to control, the sources of authority, and day-to-day running of a scheme (Osorio-Cortes & Ziswiler, 2009).

Conversely, it is crucial to acknowledge that women's participation in development projects, as Maneja (2002) shows, is just an indication that may duplicate current arrangement and disparities or indirectly show modifications in the structural framework. In the effort to understand empowerment, it is fundamental to create opportunities for women to give their motives for participating in projects, as participation does not necessarily imply empowerment (*ibid.*).

### **2.3.1 Participation in the informal economy**

Literature on informal economy show that there have been contentious debates pertaining to the definition of this concept (Devey *et al.*, 2006). It is argued that informal economy takes in to account the heterogeneity that is eminent in the second economy, hence validating its adoption in this study over the informal sector. However, this draws heavily from Keith Hart's coinage of the informal sector, and for both these are economic activities which are of small scale and potentially evading certain government requirements (*ibid.*). Some see informal economy as the second economy that complements the formal while, some view it as the last option for those who could not make their way into the formal economy.

Informal economy has been engendered by amongst others the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s that consequently generated counter-cyclical fiscal plans and plummeting formal activities, coupled with the exposure of the links between women and poverty (Altman, 2008). However, this feminisation of this second economy is relentlessly rendering women worse off than men (Chen *et al.*, 2004). Based on these assertions, it can be concluded that this is the most precarious and highly segmented sector of the economy in every country. Perhaps, what remains to be revealed is its ability to empower women economically.

There is evidence-based affirmation that access to paid work can enhance women's agency and empowerment in a number of ways. For instance, a study of women engaging in industrial homework in Mexico City showed that, mainly in family units where women's economic input was crucial for household survival, women were then capable of negotiating a superior level of

respect (Kabeer, 2003). This and other studies substantiate the claim that women's access to paid work has an effect on challenging power relations within or outside the household (ibid.).

#### **2.4 Craft weaving as an Income Generating Project (IGP)**

Craft, as Wood (2011) states, is not only a source of livelihood, but it is related to conservation of artistic diversity and distinctiveness. It is further indicated that crafts have various significances and functions in women's lives and among these is the monetary activity involved with this commercial product, as crafts create job opportunities. In India crafts projects have been offered a place in planning at macro level, however, artisans are still perceived to be backward and suffer relentless marginalisation "...their average earnings are well below the stipulated minimum wages" (ibid, 2011: 5). Women weavers in Caprivi have been able to generate income that is used to cater for the needs of their poor families, and this has also given them access to wage labour (Suich and Murphy, 2002).

The case of Inina Craft Agency in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is currently providing a model for replication of the craft projects that can empower and benefit women as Nedbank and Gijima KZN (2010) attest. It is shown that all 147 women have benefited economically from the project, as the workers have been trained in computer use, and they are also to gain from the HIV/AIDS agency policy. Their products are also sold in Canada and the agency has received funding from financial organisations like Nedbank as it was discovered that it holds a future for economic empowerment of women and more for poverty reduction (ibid.).

Yadav *et al.* (2008) show that every craft requires equipment, resources and skillfulness for using raw materials and tools for innovative intentions. One can acquire little training so to be able to put together creativity and skills for production of unique items. Nonetheless, Suich and Murphy (2002) attest that there are times when replication by machine has unfavourably affected small craft communities. The other drawback of craft projects is their deficiency of personnel in possession of advertising proficiency and delivery techniques. What hinders the improvement of the economic status of craft women is for instance, lack of sufficient market outlets, which on its own demotivates workers and their innovativeness (Yadav *et al.*, (2008). Additionally, skills shortage, strenuous work, insufficient funds and unavailability of raw materials impede the development of crafts as income generating projects and their capacity to empower women.

Informal economy in Lesotho like elsewhere plays an important part in the creation of employment opportunities. The Bureau of Statistics (BOS, 2008) shows that 71.1 percent of all employed are in the informal economy. These are the people with long working hours, comparably low wages and who are mostly females (ibid.). Conversely, participation of women in income generating projects like those in Berea exemplify feminisation of labour which is deeply embedded in the labour sector of developing countries. This is what Espen and Brody (2007) feel has been generated by trade liberalisation which is common in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs), as women are likely to accept lower wages than men.

## **2.5 Global economic empowerment, poverty reduction and development**

Women empowerment is one of the fundamental aspects for promotion of human development, and the Human Development Index (HDI) is one of the poverty measures (Mahanta, 2008). Basically, when women are empowered they can contribute to human development through activities in households and in the areas where they subsist as they are more willing than men to invest on nutrition, health and education of their children. The Human Development Report of UNDP, as Mahanta (2008) shows, initiated among other notions, the Gender related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM) in 1995.

The assertion that GDI is mainly the HDI attuned for gender disparity evolved from the findings of one study in India. This led to the research to conclude that India is confronted with a challenge of making certain that there is participatory development and lessening of gender disparities if the country is to successfully accomplish and sustain economic development and human development (Kumar, 1996). What has been widely accepted is the declaration that promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women, is essential to achieving human development, poverty eradication and economic growth (ADF, 2008). This and other factors have influenced the Millennium Declaration of 2000 to have promotion of gender equality and women empowerment as their third goal.

Women who have managed their earnings and other economic resources attain increased equality. They also contribute straightforwardly to their families and societal human capital more than their male counterparts (Blumberg, 2005: 2). Total Fertility Rates (TFR) tend to be lower among economically empowered women, which is connected to income growth.

Conversely, economic empowerment of women is enhanced by raising their income just above subsistence level (ibid, 2005). This relates to the assertion that, economic independence is fundamental for altering gender inequalities and accomplishing empowerment of women (Urdang, 2006).

Osorio-Cortes and Ziswiler (2009: 5) state that empowerment is an imperative plan for lessening poverty for the reason that it utilizes "...the tactics of inclusion, collaboration and coordination to influence others or to solve problems". It is therefore, argued that empowerment needs indispensable economic resources that can develop individual's chances of attaining enhanced income (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). Literature stresses that there is a coherent relationship between poverty and disempowerment since a deficit of the resources for satisfaction of individual's basic needs frequently renders one incapable of making prudent choices (Kabeer, 1999). Therefore women in destitution should be empowered so as to decide rationally.

Feminist economics postulates that in families where more women than men are income earners, the economic status of the whole family is likely to improve as women are more likely to spend on the needs of all members (Mehra, 1997; Mahanta, 2008; Chant, 1999). They further show that men on the other hand are not willing to dispose their entire earnings but pocket a share for their preferences. Empowering women has consequently been found to be possessing valuable roll offs which correlate with development precedence, as Mosedale (2003) asserts. Basically, the benefits of WEE trickle down to the entire members related to women.

The findings of Swain and Wallentin (2008) indicate that policies and intervention that promote economic aspects, administrative power of women and change in behaviour would make a considerably larger effect for empowerment of women. Suich and Murphy (2002) posit that development projects that intend to economically empower women are extensively accredited to be the most effective initiatives of poverty reduction. Reduction of gender inequality and intensification of efforts for economic empowerment indirectly amplify the rate of economic development and poverty lessening (UNDP, 2008). However, it is verified that not all countries ranking high in terms of HDI are automatically ranking high in terms of GDI and women empowerment (Mahanta, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial to note that a high level of human development does not necessarily mean that women are economically empowered.

### **2.5.1 Disempowerment of women in Lesotho**

The patriarchal system in the country has impeded the capacity of the Constitution to provide freedom and equality for all. Women are marginalized by the prevalent male bias in the country in economic, political and social aspects of life. Fundamentally, men are granted all the power to make decisions as the household heads, and women on contrary are positioned as minors whose guardians are men (Matashane-Marite, 2005). All these have perpetuated the gender deficit prevalent in this country, albeit the ratification of global and regional policies for gender equality (UNDP Lesotho, 2006). According to UNDP Lesotho (2006: n.p) Lesotho is a signatory to these gender policies:

- Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952).
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1980).
- Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (1995).
- SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (1997).
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003).

Gendered poverty in Lesotho is perpetuated by dependence on the already deteriorating subsistence agriculture coupled with loss of remittances from South Africa in the advent of massive retrenchment of mine workers, which has positioned this economy in vulnerability (Mbetu and Tshabalala, 2006). All these adverse conditions have increasingly intensified the already dissatisfactory status of disempowerment of women.

Drawing from Harvey (2003), Marx's notion of the tendency of capitalism to establish an industrial reserve army to draw cheap labour from, relates to the disempowering experience of women in Lesotho. Mine workers who provided cheap labour to the South African mines were later retrenched, some sick or old to be cared for by women. This augmented the already existent burden of unpaid work to be performed by women and girl children (Antonopoulos, 2009; Banerjee *et al.*, 2006; Heintz, 2009). Additionally, the role of women as care givers and income

earners for some, renders them to vulnerable to among others HIV/AIDS infection (Braun, 2010). In response to this grievance the Gender and Development Policy was adapted in 2003 by the government for gender mainstreaming into development (Matashane-Marite, 2005).

Gender inconsistencies constrain women's access and preferences in many facets of life hence restricting their opportunities. Lesotho is one of the few African countries whose literacy rates are higher among women than men; however, that is not the case for their participation in development (UNDP Lesotho, 2006). To substantiate this, it is further shown that distribution of land in all places where the government is in charge, is to a large extent influenced by customary attitudes and deeds, which are unfavourable for women. Gender inequalities are still persistent despite the enactment of among others, the Lesotho Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 9 of 2006 by the parliament, which provides for the obliteration of marginal status of married women (Government Gazette, 2006).

### **2.5.2 Women economic empowerment, development and poverty reduction in Lesotho**

Gender mainstreaming in the economy for empowerment in Lesotho dates as far back as 1973, to the formation of the Women's Bureau, and the main theme was to improve the status of women (ADB and ADF, 2005). The Ministry of Women's Affairs was established in 1998 and was later renamed Ministry of Environment, Gender and Youth Affairs in 1999. This evolved into the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation in 2000. The Gender Policy of March 2003 has generated a positive environment for gender mainstreaming as gender, poverty and economic empowerment is among its priorities (ibid.). All these and other incidents led to the government's approval of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In attempting to offset the widespread gender disparities in Lesotho that hamper women participation in economic development, it is significant to lessen poverty, joblessness, mortality rates, HIV prevalence and gender-related violence (UNDP- Lesotho, 2008).

The fulfillment of this study will be the opening up of a breathing space for the women who have been disempowered and those who are already empowered to define empowerment in their own terms so to have a say in development, as this is one element that is solely omitted in a good number of Woman and Development (WAD) projects (Maneja, 2002). This can inform WEE analysis in the era of retrenchment that has forced women to be in textile industries and to

migrate to South Africa, thus changing gender relations in Lesotho (Slater and Mphale, 2008). In response to this, Mason (2005) stipulates that collective action can be employed to empower poor women but when mixed with some contestation of culture.

Economic empowerment projects in Lesotho really require replication of practices of well established organisations like the Self-Employed Women Association (SEWA). In 1972 self-employed women in India established this association, inspired by the teachings of Gandhi (Mehra, 1997). Membership ranged from women hawkers, weavers and service providers, organised with the aim of intensifying their economic projects and to campaign for their economic and political rights. In short, SEWA has successfully empowered its members. Furthermore, there is a rationale for drawing inference from the list of central human functional capabilities developed by the feminist philosopher, Martha Nussbaum (2000) in Alkire (2002), for women empowerment. Control of resources, strictly relates to economic empowerment as one can be in possession of property like land, rights to assets and opportunities on an equivalent basis with the rest (Alkire, 2002), which is what women in Lesotho are lamenting for. However, participating in income-generating projects can sometimes be deceiving as it can be assumed that it can yield economic autonomy of women for decision-making at household level, whereas the determining factor can still remain to be the exposure of such income to the husband or any other household authority (Maneja, 2002).

## **2.6 Gender and Development**

Drawing attention to obscured capabilities and social assets that are valuable for economic development can be made feasible by gender analysis, as it can indicate how all these are constricted by the socio-cultural background (de Satge, 2002). It is in this regard that Gender and Development (GAD) approach which is resultant of a shift from Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) is fundamental for this study. The core rationale for this shift was that the use of the term 'gender' was influenced by the perspective that societal roles of men and women needed transformation to support development of women and the society at large. Boserup (1986) shows that improvements in agriculture have accentuated gender roles that were already skewed in favour of men.

WID, which has its roots in United Nations programmes, was initiated in the 1970s with the intention of crafting proceedings and policies to incorporate women entirely into development. GAD on the other hand evolved in the 1980s with the purpose of eliminating economic, social and political inequalities between women and men as a prerequisite for attaining people-centered development (UNDP-Lesotho, 2006; de Satge, 2002). Though there are some variations between the two approaches, development institutions and agencies are still employing both of these approaches in diverse situations, though GAD is apparently supplanting WID. The fact that GAD employs a holistic strategy on gender issues, as it does not merely focus on women but on the relations between both, validates its utilisation for the question in hand. Moreover, the central focus of GAD is the eradication of gender imbalances that impede impartial development and women's entire participation. What it primarily intends to accomplish is to empower the underprivileged and women, which can eventually pave a route for alteration of uneven arrangements and relations (UNDP-Lesotho, 2006).

## **2.7 Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)**

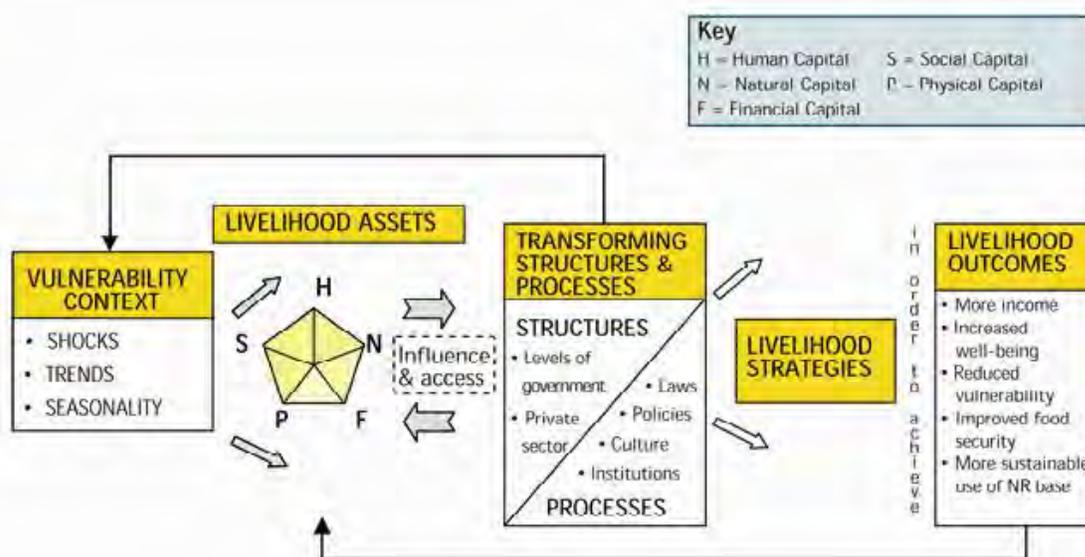
The SLA which emanates from the coinage of the sustainable development concept by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, as Chambers and Conway (1992) show, suits this study. This is because SLA really puts the theory and exercise of strategies for reducing poverty, sustainable development and participation as well as empowerment procedures into a structure for strategy analysis and indoctrination (Twigg, 2001: 8). Nevertheless, what the concept actually means in development is not yet clear. In conceptualising this, one can draw from Chambers and Conway's definition of a livelihood.

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (store, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation, and contribute net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in the long and short run. (Chambers and Conway, 1992: 7-8).

Sustainability in livelihoods discussion as adapted by DFID, CARE and UNDP, relates to the ability to handle abrupt stresses through support of locally available skills and capabilities for enhancement of individuals' ability to earn a living (de Satge, 2002). (Scoones, 2009) states that sustainable livelihoods generally relate to a range of issues that are to do with poverty and environment and stresses that natural resources should not be strained for the benefit of earning a living. Contemporarily, this approach is used for the assessment of development projects which are geared towards empowering the poor and vulnerable factions of the societies as Haidar (2009) shows. SLA perceives the improvement of women's access and participation as integral components of the process of accomplishing sustainable livelihoods, not to mention for both genders (Haidar, 2009).

It is worth acknowledging that the livelihoods frameworks of DFID, CARE and UNDP have their own merits which, if possible, can be mixed for yielding positively in development. CARE, for example, places particular emphasis on intensification of capabilities for the poor to secure their livelihoods, hence stressing empowerment as an elementary feature of its approach (Krantz, 2001). The DFID framework out-competes the other two for the reason that it is used for review of ongoing projects and attempts to relate the opportunities and limitations of such projects not only at community level but at macro level without regressing from environmental sustainability principles (ibid.). Figure 1 illustrates the DFID model of livelihoods.

Figure 1: The DFID livelihoods framework.



Source: Haidar (2009: 5).

The livelihood framework of the DFID indicates that access to livelihood assets can allow individuals to escape vulnerability to shocks for a better livelihood outcome in the long-term. This correlates with the United Nations Development for Women's (UNIFEM) definition of economic empowerment which highlights access and control for long-term sustainability (Moser, 2005). Empowerment and participation, as Osorio-Cortes and Ziswiler (2009) indicate, are at the core of SLA and there is minute uncertainty of their worth in terms of analysis and strategies. SLA supports allegations that there is a causal link between empowerment and participation.

SLA, as Krantz (2001) shows, is appreciated for being able to draw attention to a variety of assets for individuals to create livelihoods and map their routes out of subordination and poverty. Conversely, the drawback of SLA, specifically in relation to women's economic empowerment; is the failure to allot satisfactory time and resources for addressing gender inequalities. It is in this regard that women are then denied the opportunity to articulate their views pertaining to livelihoods and empowerment. SLA has a tendency to use a household as an entity in its analysis, therefore ignoring the intra-household heterogeneities, which can be misleading as the management of the economy has gender bias. The approach has to pay attention to

empowerment of women who are poor household heads and those who are in wealthy households but in subordinate relationships (Krantz, 2001).

### **2.7.1 Livelihoods and weaving crafts**

The sale of woven crafts is one of the sustainable livelihoods strategies for women in developing countries and this evolved as the economy necessitated a need for the means of sustenance to be supplemented. SLA is currently the most appropriate in capturing the relationship between craft weaving and economic empowerment of women, hence the ability of the study to draw from it. The approach has the ability to depict the fact that it is not merely the income that matters to the craft worker but what that income means (Ashley, 1999a in Suich and Murphy, 2002).

The fact that there is a considerable capacity for intensifying weaving as a livelihood opportunity for women in Arunachal Pradesh in India, as Singh *et al.* (2008) show, substantiates the view that weaving craft projects in Berea can be modified to sustain livelihoods of women. With reference to enhancement of capabilities and assets for earning a livelihood one can draw from Sen's capability approach (Alkire, 2002), as there is a positive correlation between economic empowerment of women in crafts and capabilities. It is indicated that capability refers to an individual's or group's liberty to attain an important function that one can accomplish (*ibid.*). In recent years, the significance of weaving as a livelihood alternative is being documented with reference to the demand for hand woven textiles in the local and in the global market (Singh *et al.*, 2008).

Government supported training and entrepreneurship improvement schemes in India are recently focusing on "...weaving technologies for the capacity building and empowerment of Adi women" (Singh *et al.*, 2008: 90). One factor to consider is that for weaving to be a livelihood alternative, it requires fiscal and sufficient market support together with instructions about the designs (*ibid.*). Maintenance of sufficient market for craft products is for sustaining these projects, though they are contemporarily facing the challenge of mass production by machinery of imitations of the hand-crafted products.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Women empowerment is a process than can be accomplished over a limited period of time. It is contextualized differently in various programmes. However, what is common among these is the ability to increase the capability of women to make choices and turn them into outcomes, in the name of addressing gender inequalities. The fact that economic roles of women have been ignored in societies and by development initiatives, especially in patriarchal societies in the developing countries, prompted the proposal for women empowerment.

Over the years, literature has acknowledged the link between economic empowerment of women and poverty reduction and this eventually motivated the Millennium Development Goal 3. Participation of women in informal economy, especially in crafts, has accentuated the rationale for their empowerment through income-generating projects. For the study to be complete, a livelihoods approach requires to be complemented with a WAD approach. This is because WAD has at its heart the aim of eliminating economic, social and political inequalities between women and men as a prerequisite for attaining people-centered development.

This study adopts the notion that economic empowerment has not been clearly defined and measured, as it is an ongoing process more than an outcome. Moreover, literature has unintentionally overlooked the reality that a project might present opportunities for women to participate but structural constraints may inhibit involvement of women. Conversely, it should be stressed that their empowerment is primarily determined by socio-cultural, political and economic set up of spaces for women.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter covers the selection and sampling approach of the participants for the study. Data collection method, which in this case is the interview, is also discussed. Furthermore, it provides method of data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The rationale for employing semi-structured in-depth interviews is their ability to allow one to explore the Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) experience, as comprehension of this notion by participants is hardly examined. The entire qualitative study is highly influenced by feminism<sup>3</sup>.

### **3.2 Research approach**

#### **3.2.1 Case study**

The international and continental perspectives have attempted to contextualize WEE for women participating in income generating projects. The study therefore employed qualitative methodology (Ragin, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sofaer, 1999; Creswell, 2008) on the grounds that it stresses on profound facts, and improves and expands on the social or human notions. Consequently, case study design of qualitative research was utilized and an information rich case with multiple units was used. A case study is a pragmatic inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the limits between the phenomenon and context are not obvious and multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1991 in Sarantakos,

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<sup>3</sup> Feminism

The researcher is inclined to the feminist standpoint for the reason that the study is characterised by a number of feminist research principles. Feminist research is a kind of research done on women, by women, for women with the purpose of illuminating the society of the pervasiveness of gender-blindness and overdue women captivity (Sarantakos, 2005). The aim is to revise the status of women in the socially altered patriarchies through empowerment of women via voicing out their perspectives. Disclosure of opportunities and constraints for their empowerment is the main way in which societies can be enlightened and guided in relation to mitigation of gender discrimination (ibid.).

2005). The researcher, in trying to make this in-depth exploration completely comprehensive, gathers all forms of data like pictures and any forms of mail available, therefore calling for a few cases to be studied (Creswell, 2008; Denscombe, 2007). An additional source of data collected by the researcher from both projects was in the form of pictures of woven objects, the workshops, gallery and office. One potential drawback of case study, as Sarantakos (2005) states, is that results relate to the unit of analysis only and allow no inductive generalizations. However, the study counteracted this weakness by utilizing a single case with embedded units and this allowed for collection of various perspectives from more units of the same case.

### **3.2.2 In-depth interviews**

The validity of using interviews in qualitative research, as stated by among others Gray (2004), Kvale (1996) and Turner (2010), is its ability to allow the researcher to attain considerable personalised information through probing. Interviews thus guaranteed the researcher some validity and reliability as instruments of data collection in the study (Sofaer, 1999; Creswell, 2008).

In the effort to collect data face-to-face in-depth, interviews were conducted as they allowed the researcher to observe some of the reactions of the respondents during the interview session. The one-on-one interviews possess a number of advantages over group interviews. Among these are the easiness of their arrangement and control, information coming from a single source at a time, making probing possible, and their transcription is comparably straight-forward (Denscombe, 2007). Bless *et al.* (2006: 132) assert that semi-structured interviews are "...well suited to exploratory studies, case studies or studies based on qualitative analysis of data".

These interviews were conducted in Sesotho as it was the local language that was well understood by women in these projects, except in the case of one respondent who was not a native language speaker. This encouraged research participants to relax and let ideas flow as the communication barrier was destructed. All interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder for transcription and translation into English. In fulfilling the requirements of the qualitative approach, the researcher told the stories only in the views of the participants and not as an expert judgmental about such views (Creswell, 1998).

### **3.3 Sampling strategy**

#### **3.3.1 Weaving craft case**

Non-probability sampling technique that suited the study was purposive, as it is usually used with case study research. The technique made it possible for the researcher to study the faction in profundity (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill; 2003). The intention was to pick an information-laden case which would elucidate the links between WEE and participation in income generating projects. Teya-teyaneng town in Berea district of Lesotho was selected as the case study site because it is the prominent craft town since it has the highest number of craft projects in the country.

#### **3.3.2 Single case with multiple units**

The case of this research is uniform across the units but captivated by diversity in the scenario for participants in craft projects. Therefore, a holistic case study with embedded units permitted the researcher to examine women's perspectives while allowing for the influence of the variation in settings and linked qualities on the women's experiences. Studying multiple units is fundamental for cross-case analysis, as the ability to engage in such rich analysis serves to better illuminate the case (Baxter and Jack, 2008). However, Yin (2003) in Baxter and Jack (2008) shows that researchers have a tendency to analyse the subunit and thus ignore to relate their entire findings to the global context. The study bridged this gap by contextualizing its findings to the perspectives of other women in the LDCs participating in craft projects.

It was in this regard that one found it crucial to take into account supplementary elements necessary for creating and executing a rigorous case study (ibid.). Setsoto Design at Mokhothu's village and Elelloang Basali at Ntjabane's village were both chosen among four weaving craft projects in Teya-teyaneng (T.Y.) town of Berea district in the effort to examine women's experiences of economic empowerment projects. Characteristics of the two projects are shown on table 3.1. These were selected for in-depth examination of their experiences as both projects had a potential to portray similarities and diversities existent in the projects aiming to empower women economically.

**Table 3.1 Characteristics of craft projects**

Craft project	Setsoto Design	Elelloang Basali
Location	Mokhothu	Ntjabane
Type of business	Sole proprietorship	Co-operative
No. of employees	Fifty-two	Eleven

### **3.3.3 Respondents**

The management of both projects, through a key informant in each, set out participants for the interviews. The task of arranging the relevant sample by the management personnel was simplified as the managing personnel were familiar with weavers. At Elelloang Basali project six participants were interviewed, inclusive of the chairman of the co-operative, who in this case was also a weaver, and these ranged from respondent one to six. On the other hand, eight participants from Setsoto Design project formed part of the sample inclusive of the managing director of the project, and these are respondents seven to fourteen on the write-up.

The sampling procedure was influenced by the researcher's prior knowledge about of the populace to be studied and judgment with regard to the traits of a representative sample. The aim was to utilise the units that are typical of the entire population as recommended by Denscombe (2007). A diverse sample was consequently selected purposively, taking into consideration that participants should possess nothing above post-primary qualification, and they should have two or more children. In addition to these, participants had more than one year working experience, and as such could yield rich experience for women participating in income generating-projects. The rationale for focusing on these variables for exclusion and inclusion criteria is to control for wealth, educational standards, family size and work history as these could distort the credibility and vigor of the research. Work experiences, standards of education and family sizes also have great influence on economic empowerment of women participating in income generating projects. Though valuable for case study research, this sampling technique is critiqued for its potential to lead to a non-representative sample (ibid.).

Respondents of various ages were interviewed as the projects aimed at employing and providing sustainable livelihoods for middle-aged women. The issues of household heads and household

income earner status were explored, as well as household sizes. All these and additional information about the respondents is documented on Table 5.1. Quotations from the interviews are referenced with a number followed by the date of interview for that particular respondent.

### **3.3.4 Research design**

In the effort to construct an appropriate research design, the researcher attempted to adhere to the focus, unit of analysis and time frame for the scope of the study as Bless *et al.*, (2006) emphasise their importance. This qualitative cross-sectional study employed case study methodology and in-depth interviews which enhanced acquisition of informative data. The researcher collected data within a confined period of time in the effort to avoid changes occurring globally from altering the results. The reactive effect was reduced by interviewing the participants within their typical environments (Bless *et al.*, 2006). At Setsoto design the interviews were carried out under the shade of the trees close to the gallery, while at Elelloang Basali, the participants were interviewed from the main office of the project as it was vacant most of the time.

### **3.3.5 Pilot testing**

Piloting is one crucial exercise that should be implemented prior to interviewing as it is reflective of the kind of feedback the researcher is likely to attain from the interviews. It therefore grants one with an opportunity to revise the interview schedule prior to its implementation (Turner, 2010). The researcher therefore piloted on women in the other two craft centres in Berea, which were Helang Basali and Hatooa Mose Mosali. These participants had similar interests as those participating in the intended study as Turner (2010) recommends. The exercise was carried out in December 2011; a month prior to implementation of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed with the aim of determining the defects within the schedule, hence correcting them in advance.

It was learned from the participants in the pilot study that some questions had to be rephrased as they were misinterpreted by respondents. One respondent refrained from giving her name and instead mentioned the name of the project. It was later disclosed that the weavers did not want anything to do with recorded information that might reach media. This hinted a flaw in the researcher's approach of clarification of the consent form and it was therefore improved. The practice allowed the researcher to test the feasibility of adherence to the imperative

recommendations of implementation of interviews by McNamara (2009) in Turner (2010). Piloting enhanced the skill of probing for the researcher and thus enabling a flow of requisite ideas from respondents.

### **3.3.6 Data collection**

Literature documenting WEE and participation in income-generating projects at global and local level was reviewed from April 2011 as it served to enlighten the researcher about the phenomenon of interest. Prior to interviewing; the schedule was piloted in December 2011 in two similar craft projects. Data collection then took place from January to February 2012. A semi-structured interview schedule that permitted probing was utilised for the study on fourteen participants. The questions were translated into the local language by a language expert. All interviews were administered and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews were conducted in Sesotho which was the local language for those in the projects, except for one English interview for the personnel of management of Setsoto Design project. This is because in qualitative research; data collection usually comprises of using a flexible interview schedule to allow participants to engender responses and suitable phrases (Creswell, 2008).

### **3.3.7 Thematic analysis**

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed from January to February for compilation of the findings. Notes taken from the interviews were also added to all this information. Data collected was analysed from March to April 2012. The two main questions that guided the researcher in discussing and analysing the findings were; firstly, what themes emerged from the data collected about women's experiences of WEE through their participation in IGP. This paved a route for one to classify the findings for discussion. Secondly, how can the researcher interpret the themes within the broader context of WEE and poverty characterising Female-Headed Households for policy review in Lesotho?

Thematic analysis was therefore considered, hence the review of the findings in the attempt to comprehend all the data. The researcher then attempted to contextualize data within the scope of the study through coding. This is due to the fact that analysis of data in qualitative research entails text analysis. It also involves development of themes or codes, and in interpretation, the larger meaning of findings is verified (Creswell, 2008). Codes or themes are labels (Miles and

Huberman 1994 in Bradley *et al.*, 2007: 1761) which are allocated to the entire findings and can be further coded into subsections, bearing in mind that the basic perceptions are preserved. These are major themes that emerged in the description of the phenomenon in hand by participants and later reviewed during analysis for consistency (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

The researcher acquired ethical clearance from the university ethics committee prior to interviewing the respondents. Appointments with the management of the projects preceded data collection as it was crucial to reach consensus about the convenient period for visiting the projects. The management introduced the researcher to the participants of the projects, and by so doing, clarified the purpose of a visit to the centres. Additionally, the researcher took it upon herself to clarify the purpose further to individual respondents in accordance with the procedures of the consent forms.

The researcher read the forms which were in the mother-tongue language for respondents to comprehend the intention of the entire task. It was in this process that respondents were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of their views that would transpire during the interview process. This enhanced the willingness of the respondents to sign the consent forms. Furthermore, it was clarified that the respondents were not bound or obliged to take part in the study and they could refrain from responding to some questions they were not comfortable with. In the effort to avoid interruption a one-on-one session occurred in a private space that was relaxing and enabled the easy flow of ideas.

### **3.5 Limitations of the study**

Time constraints pressurized the management of the projects to request the researcher to try to reduce the duration of the interviews. This was influenced by the mode of determination of remuneration for the weavers, as they were always busy and aspiring to finish woven pieces, so they could earn. It was in this regard that the respondents and the researcher reached a consensus of going through the interviews in the evening, towards the end of the concerned working day. This mode of wage determination also complicated the weavers' ability to calculate their real wage and whether one was to earn on a fortnight or monthly basis. This among other things ultimately influenced disclosure of an individual's income.

The researcher attempted to ensure objectivity in the research as much as possible; however, the researcher's position may have influenced the responses and the research context. Being a female raised in this patriarchal society got one attuned with women's experiences that were characterised by gender bias. Initially, the respondents interpreted the whole scenario of the researcher's presence in the projects as one of those media interventions misrepresenting the situation of women, as had been the case prior to her visit. However, for some there was a hope that the intervention would lead to instant improvement of the situation in the projects.

The in-depth interviews coupled with the case study allowed the researcher to probe and dig deeper into women's experiences; however, the researcher became absorbed and unable to fully resist partiality and subjectivity. The data collected could not all be analysed within the scope of this dissertation, and as a result the researcher prudently selected themes related directly to research objectives and questions of the study. However, it was acknowledged by the management of both projects that there is never a day when all participants are present in the project. There was no legally binding rule for participants to come to the centre on a daily basis. They therefore came to the workplace when it was convenient for them. This is what inhibited a balanced sample selection in this study.

## **CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter serves to provide the background of the case area for the study. The physical and historical background of the projects is provided. The demographical profiles of the employees and respondents are also offered. Additionally, the socio-economic state of the projects and the day-to-day running of the centres are reviewed. Photographs, maps and pictures generated during the data collection process are also presented for illustration purposes.

### **4.2 Location of Teya-teyaneng town of Berea district**

Berea is one district in the lowlands of Lesotho located 40 kilometers north of Maseru, the capital town of the country, where Teya-teyaneng is situated. Teya-teyaneng, also known as T.Y, is the main administrative town in this district.

#### **4.2.1 Demographic and Geographical context**

The percentage of population of the Berea district out of the total population is 13.6. Population distribution by sex in Teya-teyaneng where the projects are located comprises of 48.6 percent males and 51.4 percent females. This does not vary much from those of males and females in the whole district, which are 48.7 percent and 51.3 respectively. The percentage change of the population in Berea between 1996 and 2006 is 6.01 (BOS, 2007).

The ruggedness of the topography coupled with climatic changes in the entire country pose challenges for farmers in this district. Mixed farming is practiced mainly for subsistence, but with increased focus on maize as the staple crop. Berea is among the top five producers of maize in the country. However, there has been a constant decline in crop and livestock products (Kingdom of Lesotho Government, 2006).

#### **4.2.2 Socio-economic status**

Berea is the only district in the lowlands among the four least developed districts of Lesotho (BEDCO, 2010). The percentage distribution of the unemployed population of ages 15-64 years by sex and district according to ILFS (2008), show Berea to have 47.7 percent males and 52.3 percent females. In Berea more females than males are employed in urban areas, 55.5 percent

and 44.5 respectively, while it is 56.1 percent for males and 43.9 percent for males in the rural areas. The pattern is the same for most districts of Lesotho as many females engage in manufacturing and other informal income-generating activities, while males dominate the agricultural sector (ibid.). Those aged 70 years and above in this district qualify for an Old Age Pension Grant (OAP) and this benefits other household members (Nyanguru, 2007).

#### **4.2.3 Craft projects of Teya-teyaneng in Berea district**

Teya-teyaneng (T.Y.) is renowned as the country's craft town due to its adherence to the custom of mohair weaving. Leribe and Maseru do have a few craft centers, however, it is only in this town in Lesotho where four well established weaving projects are located (Morley, 2004). Two craft projects out of four are used in this case and these are Setsoto Design and Elelloang Basali craft projects as Figures 4.1 and 4.4 depict.

#### **4.3 Setsoto Design (designs of adoration)**

**Figure 4.1 Weaving workshop**



Photo: Reboetsoe Makoko

**Figure 4.2: Weaving gallery**



Photo: Reboetsoe Makoko

### **4.3.1 Location of Setsoto Design**

Setsoto Design is the pioneer of craft weaving in the country. The project is located at Mokhothu's village in Teya-teyaneng town, which is the main town of Berea district. The craft centre is approximately 100 meters from the centre of the town to the left of Blue Mountain Hotel. Figure 4.1 is a map of Lesotho, locating sites of the two cases in one town.

Figure 4.3: Map of Lesotho showing Setsoto Design and Elelloang Basali in Berea district



<http://www.golesotho.co.za/Thaba-Tseka-District-Map.jpg>

### **4.3.2 Historical background**

1956 saw the first plan for the establishment of a weaving business by a group of volunteers with the aim of creating jobs and providing skills to the unemployed local women. The pioneers aimed at employing the comparative advantage existent in the country, which is that of using profuse mohair produced. The business was registered in 1970 and eventually evolved into the present Setsoto Design in 1990, when it fell under the auspices of Patrick Glackin and Anna Glackin from Ireland ([tapestriesdesigntoday.htm](http://tapestriesdesigntoday.htm) 2010).

Setsoto in Sesotho language refers to admiration, and Setsoto Design is identified as the oldest and largest weaving project in Southern Africa. It received awards in 1987 and 1989 in the best wool weaving category, presented by the South African Wool Association. Providing local women with the means of a livelihood for them to sustain their families is still the objective of the project (Setsoto Design, 2010). The project also aims at advertising and selling globally the unique African art and heritage on the woven material (*ibid.*). Endogenous and some exogenous limitations like insufficient markets are hurdles constraining achievement of the aims of the project.

### **4.3.3 Current status of the project**

Presently, the project is owned and managed by Saeed Abubakari and Ntebaleng Kolo. There were 63 middle-aged women employed in this project and the number has gone down to 52. These included spinners, weavers and some administrators who are in possession of little or no basic education and do not have opportunities to search for work elsewhere given the increasing unemployment rate in the country.

### **4.3.4 Customary operations of the project**

Daily practices for weavers comprise of washing the spun and locally bought mohair and ensuring that it is moth proofed. They then dye and weave craft products, and sell to some local galleries like Majeed Art Gallery in Maseru. Some crafts are exported for instance, to Plettenberg Bay, the water front in Cape Town and Sandton. Individual buyers visiting the craft gallery come from the USA, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, South Africa, Israel, Britain, Germany, Norway and Canada ([tapestriesdesigntoday.htm](http://tapestriesdesigntoday.htm), 2010).

**Figure 4.4: Display of woven mats in the gallery.**



Photo: Reboetsoe Makoko

#### **4.4 Elelloang Basali (Be aware women)**

**Figure 4.5: Tinned weaving workshop and tuck shop.**



Photo: Reboetsoe Makoko

#### 4.4.1 Location of Elelloang Basali

The craft centre is located at Ntjabane's village on the main north 1 road from Teya-teyaneng (T.Y.) town to Maputsoe, which is a town in the Leribe district. Elelloang Basali is approximately a kilometer to two from the center of T.Y.

#### 4.4.2 Historical background

Elelloang Basali weavers are a group of Basotho women who became partners in a weaving business in 1997, weaving high quality mohair carpets, wall-hangings, bags and table mats. Drawings on tapestries depict the traditional life of Basotho people in their communities, especially **litema (decorations)** drawn on the walls of Basotho homes. The San Bushmen paintings are cave paintings portraying their legacy in Lesotho (Elelloang Basali Weavers, 2004).

**Figure 4.6: Display of woven items in the tuck shop**



Photo: Reboetsoe Makoko

Ever since the initiation of the partnership, women claim that they have been able to take control of their lives and advance the quality of life for their children. The proceeds from sales are shared between the members. Supplementary proceeds go to the advancement of the business (Elelloang Basali Weavers, 2004).

#### **4.4.3 Current status of the project**

The aim was to equip women with entrepreneurial skills. Initially, there were 20 members in the project. This increased up to forty-five but later plunged to the present eleven. There is a committee in charge of the running of this project. The weavers requested a volunteer from the Peace Corp office in Lesotho join them and from 2001 to 2004 Siiri Morley was allotted to work with them. Through her efforts in collaboration with Africancraft.com the number of weavers reached 40 (GKP, 2003).

Special orders from customers and companies are accepted by the weavers. Their products are sold locally and abroad as a result of global exposure of the craft project by Africancraft.com. However, most of the products are bought by tourists visiting the gallery. The project does obtain orders from individuals and from ministries locally, but it is not mainly patronized by the locals.

#### **4.4.4 Customary operations of the project**

The tapestries are end-products of hand-spun mohair locally produced. The process of weaving entails washing the spun mohair, ensuring that it is moth-proof, dyeing and weaving it into finished products.

**Figure 4.7: A woven mat hanged.**



Photo: Reboetsoe Makoko

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter provided the background of the case study. The context and site of the case were presented with specific reference to socio-economic, demographic and geographical situations. In making this case complete; historical background, current status and the nature of day-to-day operations of both projects were discussed. The context of this case study necessitated use of maps and photographs hence their provision in this section.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the findings that were generated during the research process. The section is informed by both primary sources and secondary data accessed. The material provides an indication of the factors perceived by participants in the income-generating projects that influence women's economic empowerment. The scope of this Masters dissertation constrains presentation of the entire findings. However, this section has attempted to present significant results in relation to the research questions. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first presents factors influencing participation and non-participation in income-generating projects and ways of participating in such projects. The second focuses on women and management perception of WEE, and awareness of the management of impacts of projects on WEE. The third presents impediments of WEE, the fourth provides efforts to empower women economically and the last section offers impacts of women's experience on policy-formulation.

### **5.1 Socio-economic and demographic traits of the sample**

Demographic characteristics of the entire sample have been provided in Table 5.1. The table features age, marital status, household heads by gender, household size and household type of the respondents. The findings of this study depict that the youngest respondent in the sample was aged 43 and the oldest 65, as the age ranged between 40 and 69. The mean age was 56 while the modal and median ages were both 58. Half of the respondents in the sample were widowed and six were still living with spouses, only one woman was abandoned by her husband and only one respondent was a male directing one of the two projects. Eight of these respondents were from Female-Headed Households (FHH). There was only one out of six respondents from Male Headed Households (MHH) who was the sole income earner from the project. The other five were from MHH with multiple income earners.

However, none of the respondents from FHH had more than three children. Eleven of the respondents were from households with four or less members. In terms of the family type, it was found that 10 of the respondents were from extended families and only four from nuclear families. Lastly, the respondents served the project for five years while there were some

respondents who served up to 43 years. The number of years in service in the project for those at Elelloang Basali was lesser as they moved from Setsoto Design to Hatooa Mose Mosali, and later to the present project, Elelloang Basali. Nevertheless, this was not the case in terms of the length of service in weaving, as six of them prior to being at Elelloang Basali, had served for more than 15 years with one respondent having the longest service of 28 years.

**Table 5.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

	Elelloang Basali	Setsoto design	All
Number of respondents sampled	6	8	14
<i>Variable</i>			
<i>Age (years)</i>			
40-49	0	3	3
50-59	4	2	6
60-69	3	2	5
<i>Marital status</i>			
Married	4	2	6
Widowed	1	6	7
Separated /deserted	1	0	1
<i>Household Head (gender)</i>			
MHH	4	2	6
FHH	2	6	8
<i>Sole income earner (by gender of HH)</i>			
MHH	1	0	1
FHH	1	4	5
<i>Multiple income earners (by gender of HH)</i>			
MHH	3	2	5
FHH	1	2	3
<i>HH Size (members)</i>			
0-4	4	7	11
5-9	2	1	3
<i>HHT (hhtype)</i>			
Nuclear family	1	3	4
Extended family	5	5	10
<i>Service in the project (no. of years)</i>			
1-9	1	1	2
10-19	5	0	5
20-29	0	2	2
30-39	0	2	2
40-49	0	3	3

### **5.1.1 Factors influencing participation in income generating projects (IGP).**

The study revealed that women's participation in the craft weaving projects, geared towards income generation; was mainly influenced by what will be described as push rather than pull factors in relation to employment. Basically, women had to sustain themselves and their households despite shortage of skills, which rendered them unemployable elsewhere other than in such craft projects.

### **5.1.2 Shortage of skills and household sustainability**

In response to what motivated them to partake in these projects, participants indicated that their participation was mainly influenced by the fact that they had no qualifications that could render them employable elsewhere other than in these projects. The study discovered that none of them had any post-primary qualification but needed to earn for livelihood. The six women at Elelloang Basali project acquired weaving skills from Setsoto Design as they were former employees of that project. It was in this project where women without skills were employable and had an opportunity to acquire on-job training as stated by respondent 12 (31 January 2012):

*“In the past a person used to be trained for three months or so. I used to struggle a lot, but because I had an interest in weaving, I eventually made it”.*

Respondent 6 (01 February 2012) shared the same opinion though with insignificant variation, as the response is from the project management perspective:

*“We then employed anybody who came to this project searching for a job. We did not bother whether such a person had any skills or not. We then trained them and ensured that they acquired the weaving skill while rewarding them at the same time, until she could weave perfectly all the items made in this project. However, we have now stopped employing people because we have realized that the project is not flourishing as it used to”*

From this it can be concluded that craft projects are potential employers of unskilled labour as shown by both projects. Respondents relied heavily on these wages as none of them was a recipient of some form of social grant. These are the projects that train and equip women with skills that enable them to strive for the livelihoods of their households, although this was partly constrained by low wages received from the projects. This has appeared to be of benefit to the

women in Elelloang Basali as they have used the skills attained from Setsoto to establish their own project.

Moreover, participants indicated that they had neither skills nor qualifications to be in any other employment for household sustainability other than through their involvement in the projects. However, in response to what they anticipated to be the benefits of their participation in the projects, they all specified that they needed income. This is what drove them to search for jobs as they were not willing to be unemployed, idle at home and become needy, as stated:

*“Just like a woman who never wanted to be idle, I felt it was necessary for me to be in some sort of income generating project that would provide me with some cash for my needs and avoid waiting to get cash only from my husband”*. Respondent 9 (17 January 2012).

The same view was shared by another respondent:

*“I really did not feel like being at home. I wanted to be employed and be busy. It never felt good to be unemployed, especially if I wanted to raise the children”*. Respondent 11 (17 January 2012).

The managing director of Setsoto Weaving Gallery stated that for him the primary motive of participating in the project was the financial one. The secondary motive was that of preserving the history of the craft project as it is the oldest in the Southern African region.

It was revealed by most responses that the project played a role of sustaining the weavers as two of the respondents indicated that they had to be employed when their husbands passed away; rendering them responsible for the entire household needs as respondent 12 (31 January 2012) indicated:

*“I seriously realized after the death of my husband that I had to shoulder all the family needs and satisfy them”*.

Women from FHH had to acquire employment to sustain their households upon the death of their husbands as they became the sole income earners in such households.

Four of the respondents indicated that they found it necessary to engage in a project that could generate some income for their households as the already erratic remittances from their husbands

delayed reaching their families, and there were times when they never received any. In the event that they did not receive the remittances, they had to struggle financially to keep their households in order. Approximate monthly average earning of R300.00 per month partly served to rescue women from vulnerability to socio-economic perils as shown by Respondent 10 (17 January 2012):

*“One does not even know the exact amount because at the end of the month you might earn R400.00 or R300.00. At times you weave a smaller piece from which you only earn R100.00”.*

The commonality among respondents is the need to engage in income-generating projects for livelihood. Nonetheless, the management of Setsoto had a preservation motive besides the pecuniary one as opposed to the entire sample.

### **5.1.3 Self-employment**

Women at Elelloang Basali indicated that they were determined to work in the business under their own auspices and management. This was raised when responding to the question about whether they had taken part in any schemes of the craft nature prior to being at Elelloang Basali or not. Furthermore, it was necessary to find how they got to participate in the project. Regarding this, they emphasised that a decision taken to organise their own employment was the primary factor that influenced them to participate in the project, thus a project of their own creation.

It was in such a project that they could be able to enact rules and regulations that suited them. This was motivated by the fact that all of the weavers at Elelloang Basali were former workers of Setsoto Design who later saw it fit to establish their own business, and this was Hatooa Mose Mosali. The Hatooa Mose Mosali project had suffered from disruptions resulting in some of these women deciding to establish Elelloang Basali, as one respondent indicates:

*“Later we thought about having our own business and decided to form a co-operative that would benefit us. This was when Mrs. Gage of Setsoto indicated that she might leave us under the auspices of someone else. We were not content with this conclusion and decided to leave and establish our own business. This would be a place for us to formulate rules and regulations that would benefit us in life. We had realised that in case one of us could face a challenge like that of being injured in the workplace, for instance, by the frames that we use for weaving, it would*

*mean that such a person would have to go home without any benefits whatsoever. We then decided to organize ourselves in to a co-operative as this would enable us to come up with laws that would make our lives easier".* Respondent 1 (05 January 2012).

On contrary, women who were left at Setsoto continued to work in the project run by a sole proprietor, as has been the case since its establishment. None of the respondents at Setsoto Design considered initiation of a co-operative project.

## **5.2 Factors influencing non-participation in Income Generating Projects (IGP)**

It is notable that the weavers indicated that they joined both projects as middle-aged women who were unskilled and willing to be in these projects. However, these women also pointed out that the working scenario and conditions prevalent in the projects were often found to be repellent to new recruits regardless of the flexibility of the rules. Workers in both centres are allowed to leave and return to the project at their convenience, but other women who did not participate generally reported to those that did participate that their choice was influenced by low remuneration prospects in the projects.

### **5.2.1 Recruitment complexities**

The age of workers at Elelloang Basali ranged between 53 and 62 while it was 43 and 65 for those at Setsoto Design. None of the respondents were in their 30s. None of these workers had less than 10 years experience. This therefore serves to highlight the complexity that characterise the recruitment procedure in both projects. The management of both craft projects stated clearly that the fundamental challenge for them is that of failing to lure middle-aged and younger women to join them. These groups of women have demonstrated their unwillingness to join the projects. They have shown discontent for the piece-rate mode of payment of the wages utilised by the projects. Furthermore, the same unreliable wage is incapable of catering for much beyond sustenance.

*"We once employed many and filled up this shelter but they later decided to leave us as they discovered that they could not be sustained by the little wages earned".* Respondent 3 (06 January 2012).

The nature of the jobs was specified by three participants as a repellent to the new recruits into the projects. One of these respondents stated:

*“Our children are not fond of weaving as they label it as a dirty job that can soil them”.*  
Respondent 1 (05 January 2012).

The mode of payment coupled with the nature of the work negatively influences participation in the project. This has driven the management to accept that as long as a weaver has another project to attend to, she can then absent herself from this one of weaving so to secure income elsewhere. Additionally, it is allowed for a worker to return to the workplace at a time convenient for her. The implication is that there is hardly a day when all weavers are present at the centres.

### **5.3 Ways of participating in IGP**

Questions were asked around the nature of the participation in the projects beyond the more limited issue of what motivated women to join the projects. In response to the question of how they have participated in the projects and whether their participation impacted on how the project was run, women in both centres indicated that they have participated in diverse ways to shape their projects and ensure that they succeeded. According to the findings, eight women at Setsoto weaving project who responded stated that upon their arrival at the centre, they had no weaving skills whatsoever. They acquired training upon joining this project. All the weavers at Elelloang Basali were trained while they were still at Setsoto weaving project, as all of them were initially workers there. Therefore, most of them started as spinners and later became weavers.

#### **5.3.1 Entrepreneurial skills enhancement**

The findings also show the acknowledgement of respondents of their involvement in the projects which evolved over time as they all acquired the skills of spinning, dyeing and weaving attractive merchandise. This was significant evolution as two of all these weavers documented their roles as spinners who later transferred to weaving at Setsoto weaving project. It was discovered that Setsoto design is managed by male personnel with the help of the wife while Elelloang Basali is initiated and run by women themselves.

All of the participants at Elelloang Basali project have alternated managerial positions among themselves since the inception of the project to date, as one respondent stated that:

*“In this project we have some record books that we use for noting any financial accounts. So in a period of maybe two years we change the committee. The aim is to ensure that every member should have a taste and knowledge of all activities carried in the running of this project so that if one of us leaves, then someone else can provide a helping hand. This means that in this business generally everyone should have an idea of what goes on in all portfolios. I was once the chairman and I have given this position to another member”*. Respondent 1 (05 January 2012).

Setsoto weaving by virtue of being a sole proprietorship; was run by an independent entrepreneur as opposed to Elelloang Basali which was a co-operative. Furthermore, women at Elelloang Basali found it worthwhile for all of them to wash, dye and weave. There was only one woman who spun mohair for the centre. One respondent from this centre approved her participation and how it had evolved over time in the project as she stated:

*“My special role in this project is that of being a treasurer for the women. This has improved the project because I manage their money well and I keep up-to-date records. By the end of the month I show them a progress report. I was initially dyeing and washing and even weaving, until I reached this point of being a treasurer. However, I am still dyeing and weaving today”*. Respondent 3 (05 January 2012).

Another participant from Elelloang emphasized that her participation in particular has impacted positively on the project and it has evolved over time, as she stated:

*“I weave and sell the products made. I employ my marketing skills to the fullest in order to encourage a customer to buy our products. The other ladies usually comment that if I have been out to market the products, I make sure that I bring home some cash for the centre. My involvement changed as for example, I went to Mexico. We also went to Washington with one lady where I sold some of the products. We also started to learn new techniques of attracting and addressing customers, not to forget to spot what they like, particularly those from abroad. I went to Mexico for the second time and this helped me to learn more about weaving and how such a business is run”*. Respondent 5 (09 January 2012).

All respondents declared that their participation has impacted positively on the running of the projects. The woman in the management of the Elelloang Basali project, when responding to how her involvement has evolved over time, stated that:

*“Of course my involvement has played part in this project. When I came here I started in treasury and worked for a long time in that office. My contribution has empowered us a lot. When I review the project I acknowledge the fact that I have contributed to making all the women to be successful as they are today. The project would not be in this shape had I not taken part in it.”* Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).

The involvement of all the weavers transformed although with some exceptions as most of those at Setsoto Design, have never had an opportunity of being in a managerial position in the project, compared to the weavers in Elelloang Basali. This has positioned all the Elelloang Basali weavers at a greater advantage over those at Setsoto Design of eventually acquiring entrepreneurial skills from the project. However, Setsoto Design is more successful from the commercial perspective as the monthly proceeds approximate R30, 000.00. Part of this was saved while there were no savings for Elelloang Basali at that particular time.

#### **5.4 Women’s perspective of economic empowerment**

There are many definitions of what constitutes empowerment but these vary substantially in terms of women’s treatment of economic issues. Nevertheless, most responses related to financial independence and sustainability and having basic needs met, has been the focus of women’s activities. Some respondents provided more generalised definitions as one of them indicated that for her:

*“It implies improved life for one”.* Respondent 2 (05 January 2012).

It was in this regard that it became necessary to interrogate the perceptions further; hence asking for indicators of economic empowerment for individuals, and one respondent indicated that:

*“If I were able to extend my house and satisfy all my needs, I would then say I am empowered. I have to be economically independent”.* Respondent 2 (05 January 2012).

All of the participants appreciated this concept on the grounds that:

*“I think we really have to be empowered economically, such that we change for the better and not experience economic stagnation, which is what I am going through now, as I am not observing any progress in life”.* Respondent 13 (31 January 2012).

Furthermore, in relation to the rationale for WEE; another respondent stated that:

*“When women are empowered, there is potential for the livelihood of the whole household to improve. Men do not have the ability to maintain households like women. They spend on other things that are not to the benefit of the family”.* Respondent 7 (17 January 2012).

It was not surprising to discover that the interviewed respondents could not provide a coherent definition of WEE. They would rather offer what they thought WEE is related to or validate it. All in all, women assured that economic empowerment is a relevant concept for women.

### **5.5 Management’s perception of women economic empowerment (WEE)**

On the basis of what those controlling both projects perceive WEE to be, it was found that it was understood as provision of women with the resources for sustaining themselves and their households. The managing personnel of Elelloang Basali project had a similar perception to that of weavers at Elelloang Basali hovered around that one of other weavers in both projects as stated:

*“Women have to be economically empowered because if I am at home basking in the sun; I would not be able to feed the children. But a project like this one, meant for poverty reduction, implies that I will be able to buy shoes, my children will never sleep on empty stomachs as I can buy them food and clothing and I can pay for their medical expenses whenever they fall sick”.* Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).

Similarly, WEE was perceived by the management of Setsoto Design as giving others a chance to earn incomes. Women in this project earn for their livelihoods and that of their households as most of them are bread winners taking care of their children and unemployed husbands.

## **5.5.1 Awareness of the management on the impact of the projects on WEE**

### **5.5.1.1 Workers' welfare**

The management of both centres declared their determination to empower women economically. Nevertheless, there are various factors encouraging or inhibiting these efforts. The management of Setsoto weaving specifically acknowledged that the project is not rewarding the weavers satisfactorily to supply all their needs. Therefore, the projects have failed to assure workers of their decent welfare and its advancement. However, the project has managed to keep women going, as opposed to being at home with no wage at all, as stated:

*“These women are able to earn a living to do what they want, to take their children to school. Most of the women here have children who are graduates. They will tell you that from the little they are earning, they are able to take care of themselves and take care of their husbands. In other words the women become the bread winners of their families because of the same project”.* Respondent 14 (06 February 2012).

On the other hand, women at Elelloang Basali according to the management of the project; were benefiting from the project as some have been able to educate their children and sustain their households, as respondent 6 (01 February 2012) asserted:

*“When it comes to sales, there was a time when we would sell a lot. We were then able to educate our children as the earnings were enough for us to pay the fees and related costs. Our households' status were improved. Those who had a one-roomed house were able to build the second room”.*

The projects were to a limited extent enabling respondents to cater for the needs of their household members.

The other side of the coin proved that prolonged service in weaving had repercussions. This cropped up in relation to whether participants found the projects to be empowering them or not. It was ascertained by one woman at Elelloang Basali that even though the project had provided her with the earnings for sustenance, her eye-sight had deteriorated because of the nature of the work:

*“Women here can remember me for the drawings that I made for weaving. I am still weaving, but I have a serious eye-sight problem. I even think that if by the end of this year I have not accumulated sufficient funds for removal of the cataract, I will not be able to make it next year. The eyes are strained a lot. I am using one eye these days, the other one cannot see any more. This is because the threads are too thin and it is a hectic task to pick them individually”.* Respondent 4 (06 January 2012).

Nevertheless, the same management admitted that some of the workers eventually left the project as it was stated:

*“We started in 1997 and around 2000 the project was flourishing. We were rapidly progressing. Unfortunately, this dropped with a fall in the number of tourists visiting our show room as our products are mainly bought by the tourists. This was the major factor that led to the fall in the rates of the sales. As a result the workers would go for a month or so without earnings. Most of the workers then felt discouraged and found it worthwhile to leave the project”.* Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).

The ex-weavers, as indicated, could not bear the consequences of the economic downturn that hit the project. This was more apparent at Elelloang Basali than at Setsoto design as the project had the number of workers that shrunk from 45 to 11.

In terms of whether the project has improved the personal incomes of the workers or not, nine respondents declared that their earnings had instead made it impossible for them to acquire the necessities for their households other than food stuffs. The management of both centres admitted that the piece-rate mode of determining remuneration of the labour, notably impacts negatively on empowerment of the weavers. This mode of payment is disadvantageous for those weaving at a slower pace in comparison to those who can weave faster. Respondent 14 (06 February 2012) ultimately pointed out that:

*“The women here do not earn much because of the nature of the project. We try to improve this but it has not yet gone according to our plan. The work depends on how fast one works. Some are paid wages and some get salaries based on the piece rate. Those who make more money are faster women; those who are slow do not earn much. But all in all, what I can say is that, this is the same project which has helped women to take their children to school and other places”.*

Respondent 10 (17 January 2012) disclosed that:

*“We do not even know the amount as we are not earning on a monthly basis. Our earnings are determined by the size of the piece one finishes weaving. There are times when one can weave a mat for the whole month. One does not even know the exact amount for a month’s work because at the end of the month you might earn R400.00 or R300.00. At times you weave a smaller piece from which you only earn R100.00”.*

The mode of determining the wages utilized by both projects complicated the calculation and disclosure of individual earning.

## **5.6 Impediments of women economic empowerment.**

### **5.6.1 Market and raw materials**

Participants from both centres showed that the main factor hampering the capability of the project to empower them economically was the nature of the market, as it was not reliable and sufficient. The markets were viewed by all respondents to be poor and requiring immediate intervention from appropriate government ministries, although there were some minor variations for two respondents. According to them marketing strategies of the management still had to be modified for the benefit of the projects. This was substantiated by a response from one interviewee stating that:

*“The project is faced with the challenges of poor market, hence a drop in sales. All these hamper the improvement of wages because if the sales rates were rapid, weavers would earn more. Customers are expected to come to this centre to purchase the mats. Eventually, few customers are able to reach the gallery, meaning these products will be on display in the show room for a longer period than expected. Improvement of our incomes as weavers also depends on the management’s marketing strategy”.* Respondent 09 (17 January 2012).

The implication is that if all products could be sold in time this could enable the management to improve the earnings of the workers, which means they would be economically well-off and empowered.

In both centres women indicated that one other major factor hindering the ability of the project to empower them was the frequent shortage of raw materials, especially mohair which is usually out of stock when the shearing season is over. Two respondents suggested that it could be beneficial for the project to buy mohair in bulk before the end of the shearing season. It was declared necessary for the management to attend to this issue as it had debilitating effects on the project and its capacity to empower the weavers. This was clarified by one respondent who indicated that:

*“Unavailability of mohair inhibits women’s capacity to produce as we know that goats are sheared in winter. When the shearing is long over, we are faced with serious problems. This was the case even during the Christmas period as we ran out of mohair”.* Respondent 11 (17 January 2012).

Other than the unavailability of mohair, the twine and dyes used in both projects are imported from Durban in R.S.A. This meant there was unavoidable expenditure for the projects and some of the weavers suggested that it would be more economic for the projects to access all the materials in the country than import them. Participants state that shortage of raw materials impacts negatively on WEE. According to one respondent:

*“The fact that we sometimes run out of raw materials is impeding the project’s ability to empower us, for instance we came here on Monday but we have not engaged in any form of production up to today (Friday). This means we leave our homes to do nothing in this project”.* Respondent 10 (17 January 2012).

Shortage of mohair was more of a prominent concern for those at Setsoto design as the management indicated that there were 52 women employed, hence a greater demand.

### **5.6.2 The burden of unpaid work**

What is detrimental to WEE women as revealed by this study is that all women performed unpaid work simultaneously with paid work. This renders women burdened with substantial amounts of work in and outside the household, inclusive of gardening. These unrewarding household tasks were socially construed as what should only be performed by women or girl children. In regard to this, all respondents pointed out that they woke up early in the morning to

perform household chores before heading for remunerative work in the projects. They were only rewarded for the work done in the project while there was no economic value attached to the work performed in their households.

### **5.6.3 Household heading and poverty**

In terms of household heads, responses varied but at the end of the day it was discovered that most of the women headed the households. Feminist economists have asserted that Female Headed Households (FHH) tend to be poorer than Male Headed Households (MHH). In the case of this study eight out of 14 respondents were from FHH as opposed to six that were from MHH. When exploring this further it was discovered that of the eight from FHH, five had a weaver as the sole household income earner and bread winner while three households had multiple household income earners. Furthermore, there was only one respondent from a MHH with the sole bread winner as the weaver herself, and five with multiple income earners. Nevertheless, none of the respondents from FHH with the weaver as the sole income earner lived with more than three children and none of these households were bigger than four. There were two out of three respondents from MHH with the households having between five and nine members while the other one was from a FHH.

### **5.6.4 Effects of economic crisis**

Weaving projects operating at micro level ultimately realised a decrease in the number of tourists visiting the projects. This eventually led to a decline in the rate of sales of woven material as such products are mostly purchased by tourists. These were stated by respondents in relation to whether the projects improved their personal income or not, and if they found the projects to be empowering them.

Consequences of the economic crisis according to six of the respondents entailed an unavoidable decrease in their wages. According to women at the Elelloang Basali project, they had to have their wages cut in an effort to sustain the project as its economic status was heading for devastation, as stated:

*“At first we used to earn satisfactorily, but with the passage of time, especially during the economic recession, we all struggled and our wages had to drop. This we did as we realised that*

*if we were to maintain the same wages, the project would collapse as the sales had plummeted*". Respondent 5 (09 January 2012).

On the same note of improvement of personal income; the management of Setsoto Design interviewed on 06 February 2012, stated that:

*"There is not much improvement of personal income really as several times the business was not often good and one had to deplete all the profits one had produced in order to take care of this and use money generated from other projects to boost this one. For example for the 2010 world cup we incurred serious losses as we expected a lot of visitors in the country and we did not see any visitors. We only got one for the whole of the 2010 world cup, who came and bought for only R2000.00. It was worse than any other years I have been in this business. That meant that year was such a horrible one for us as we had to take proceeds from other projects to boost this one. Our expectations were so high and then it became a disappointment"*.

It can be seen from the findings that the global economic recession of 2008 hit LDCs like Lesotho mostly and its impacts were negative at both micro and macro levels. Wages were reduced for those at Elelloang Basali; which was not the case for women at Setsoto Design. In the case of the latter, wages were merely stagnant and did not enable women to meet the expenses of their households.

Almost all the respondents indicated that they were not saving as there were no prospects of allocating any part of their earnings to savings. This was fundamentally due to the insufficiency of already fluctuating earnings, as their wages could not render them in a position to cater for household needs and save at the same time. This was confirmed by one respondent who stated that:

*"We are not saving because the economy is not in a position to permit us to consider saving any cash. It is all spent on the household needs and school fees"*. Respondent 11 (17 January 2012).

The earnings from both projects as shown by the respondents were not sufficient to keep the weavers in a position to afford all the basic needs for their households, except for one interviewee in the management of Elelloang Basali. Otherwise, all weavers declared that the piece rate mode of payment, which was irregular, coupled with meagerness, allowed them to

purchase food substances and related household stuffs. Moreover, 11 respondents declared that their incomes were spent on household needs and not their own needs, as respondent 12 interviewed on 31 January 2012 indicated:

*“At times I do not even have a good pair of shoes. I am only focusing on these children. I always tell myself that I do not matter because I am already old. I ensure that I satisfy the needs of my children and I work very hard”.*

It was declared by nine respondents of which six were from Setsoto Design, that the projects were not improving their personal incomes as opposed to the affirmation of the remaining five. One of them stated that:

*“It is not improving my income really. The wage is apparently stagnant as there is never a time when one is able to purchase an asset that later can enable one to acknowledge the tangible benefits of the project, for instance, to say ‘I bought a bed or a wardrobe’. I only work to afford food because even the assets that I have, were bought when my husband was still working”.* Respondent 13 (31 January 2012).

Out of the five who confirmed that the project had improved their personal income; three were from FHH where the weaver was the sole income earner for the household, while the other two were from MHH with multiple income earners. All in all, wages for workers in both projects were nearly similar. The wages only enabled them to sustain their households and for all women this was better than having no earnings. For the women in a co-operative, self-employment served to console them.

### **5.6.5 Socio-cultural factors**

In response to whether there are some challenges that women face in the communities that can impede their economic empowerment, all respondents indicated that women are yet to tackle various challenges. Most of these challenges were affirmed to be socio-culturally inclined but having a pessimistic bearing on economic development for women. The management of Setsoto weaving project indicated that WEE is impeded by the fact that women working in this project have a lot of burdens to bear from the social perspective as they have additional responsibilities to shoulder in their households.

*“One problem is that I think they have too many responsibilities. They have to take care of their children, their husbands, their mothers and the extended family; they have more responsibilities than the men. They are mothers and they have that desire for the betterment of their families, so the main thing is whatever they earn is spent on widespread area of needs. Taking care of the family, the grandchildren, is the only thing that is not helping them to progress so much”.*  
Respondent 14 (06 February 2012).

All of the respondents from both projects stated that Basotho cultural practices are existent to the detriment of women more than men. Basically, these practices inhibit economic empowerment of women in many respects. One obvious case pointed out by 13 respondents was that of women having to be in the mourning attire for several months when bereaved, while this had never been the case for men when a wife or a child had passed on.

There was only one respondent who insisted that she was willing to be in this attire when mourning for her husband as it had been the case for her two deceased children. She initially stated that the practice does not impede economic empowerment. However, she later admitted that the practice had a diminishing effect on wages and empowerment as one in mourning attire could not reach home late like other women who devoted extra hours to increased production.

Many women in both centres articulated that this practice impedes WEE as a woman in this attire had to abide by some rules that disrupted her work schedule. On this note, one respondent indicated that:

*“Traditional life of Basotho strongly impedes economic empowerment of women and it would be best if these practices could be discarded, especially for women. This culture should not only be harsh on women, and it would be best if these practices could be done by men too. It appears as if women are being punished for the reason that they are brought into a new family as in-laws”.*  
Respondent 1 (05 January 2012).

The above assertion concurred with the response from one participant who indicated that:

*“Women are sometimes forced by the in-laws to bear children at the time convenient for them. If one cannot bear children; one is condemned to be barren and might be divorced. The wife is*

*usually left to raise them while the husband is likely to abandon her and shoulder her with the burden”*. Respondent 7 (17 January 2012).

Socio-cultural factors also impede economic empowerment of women as abandoned families were likely to become poorer and women in such households bear the brunt of catering for the entire needs of the households. The study revealed the exact case for only one respondent out of the entire sample from a FHH who was abandoned and had to nurture the children and orphaned grandchildren. Older women had to provide for their children and orphaned grandchildren from the income earned from the projects.

#### **5.6.5.1 Access and control of land and livestock**

When responding to whether they had land or not, all respondents in this study lamented that access and control of land have never been a women’s area, in terms of the land tenure system in place, in the country. Free land was traditionally allocated to a man and his family by the village chief and not to a woman. The documents for land would bear the names of the husband and not of the wife, for the wife was treated as a minor under the guardianship of her husband. When asked why the sites were in the names of their husbands and not in theirs, some respondents indicated that:

*“It is because the husband is the head of the family and he is the one who has asked for the site in his name. A woman is also under the husband as the head of the family.”* Respondent 3 (06 January 2012).

In response to whether the documents for the land bear men or women’s names, two respondents indicated that the land they were occupying got to be in their names only after the death of their husbands, other than that, it would have never been so.

*“What happened is that when my husband passed away, because we had animals, the chief and his advisors decided that all the documents should bear my names. Initially these were in his names except for the site, as his grandfather ordered that it be in my name. He said he did this purposely as men sometimes remarry”*. Respondent 10 (17 January 2012).

Respondent 11 interviewed on 17 January 2012 shared the same view:

*“Now that my husband has passed away, I am the one owning the land. Due to the fact that they were traditionally allocated to us; while the husband is still alive the land has to be in his name and when he passes away it is then that the land gets to be in my name”.*

In addition to this, one respondent who was widowed and eventually went to live in her parents' home when they passed away affirmed that in relation to allocation of land and inheritance:

*“Men are given priority over women. If women were also to inherit, I would have inherited my home. It is always stated in Sesotho that a man is the head of the household. Whether he is young or old, he becomes the head of the whole household even when there are some elderly females”.* Respondent 7 (17 January 2012).

When asked if it could have been possible to acquire land assuming they were never married, most of them stated that they would have to buy it and not approach the chief to allocate it to them, as it was not going to be easy or even impossible to be granted such land. There are those who clarified that it would have been a hassle and the only solution would be to have a brother convince the chief on their behalf to allocate them land. The same applied for a woman who had been deserted by the husband, though with a little variation as the family members would convince the chief that her husband had deserted her and she therefore deserved access to land.

In terms of livestock management; it was discovered that not many of the respondents owned livestock and for those who did, it was fully controlled by men. When asked whether women have always been in control of household livestock, 13 respondents indicated that it was in rare cases like when the husband had passed on. Livestock management had always been a man's responsibility among the Basotho people. This was for instance, depicted by the response from a woman in the management of Elelloang Basali project when asked if a woman had control over the household livestock in the absence of the husband:

*“When she has not received remittances from the husband and was sleeping on an empty stomach, people will advise her to sell the livestock, but she will instantly respond that the husband has not authorized her to do so. She would not sell; as she is a minor who cannot make decisions. She suffers and remains poor while the household is in possession of livestock. Men control cattle and sheep and surprisingly even the pigs. A woman is still treated as a minor or a child”.* Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).

Some women admitted that they eventually got to be in control of the household livestock only after the death of their husbands, except for two respondents who showed that the proceeds from the livestock and its products are under the control of both partners in the household. Conversely, there were six respondents who had no livestock, only one at Elelloang Basali and five at Setsoto Design, and five out of these six were from FHH.

### **5.7 Efforts to empower women economically**

The study revealed that the motives for launching Elelloang Basali project vastly concurred with most of the traits of economic empowerment projects. The central focus of such projects is to empower women with entrepreneurial skills, hence enabling them to run businesses for their welfare. This was attained from the responses of the participants in terms of their motive for being in their project and whether the project is empowering them or not:

*“For the reason that we ensure that each member of this project acquires experience through her occupation of each of the managerial positions; we therefore, have members shifting from one position to the other. We aim at keeping all members informed of all issues that shape this project. If for instance, some officials happen to visit us, the personnel present in the project can be in a position to disseminate the requisite information instantly. If few members are informed of the running of the project to the detriment of the other members, the project can run into the risk of malfunctioning in the event that the informed individual is absent”.* Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).

One unique feature discovered about Elelloang Basali project is that of aiming at security of livelihoods for the households of the deceased members. According to the management of this project:

*“We also have some of our members who passed away and we decided to assist their children financially. I think two ladies died three in fact. Every month their children come to get money from this project up to the age when they are independent. Each of these families collects R200.00. We look at the youngest member of the family and ensure that the siblings buy food or shoes for the young one. When this project was initiated we had in mind that it should not only benefit us, but it should be for our children to reap the fruits of our toils, especially when we retire. They even know that their parents established a firm in which, when they die, their*

*children can become workers. We now have one who is already working here while some are employed elsewhere, as the youth are not willing to wait for such stories to be told when one expects nothing but a wage". Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).*

The project sustained the livelihoods of the deceased members and it has proceeded to do so for their households. This was not the case for Setsoto Design. Perhaps the motive for running of a particular type of business had a role to play in relation to such matters. However one respondent from the latter project affirmed that the management came to her rescue a few months ago. This was when she was faced with the challenge of incurring burial costs for her grandchild.

In relation to inter-project advancement, it was found that some members of these projects have experienced efforts of economic empowerment from related government ministries.

*"I moved to Soai village in the mountain areas of Thaba-Tseka district to train women weavers in that district on how to spin mohair that would be used by our centre. They were then able to spin the threads that we could use. Later on I went to Botswana to train women there to spin threads and weave". Respondent 1 (05 January 2012).*

Attempts to empower them, for instance, came in the form of information dissemination at workshops. It was in such workshops that policies and laws meant for addressing prevalent gender bias in the country were discussed. However, this occurred to the exclusion of a lot of other women in other craft projects. The management of Setsoto Design on the other hand, highlighted that the workers were sometimes provided with guidance and recommendations for parents to instill responsibility in their children. This was seen as a mode of reducing the burden shouldered by the parents and grandparents working in the project.

### **5.7.1 Justification for WEE**

The part that follows presents what respondents considered as the validity of WEE.

### **5.7.2 The trickle-down effect of WEE and financial independence**

When it came to the rationale for relevance of economic empowerment for women, all participants in this study indicated that WEE has the trickle-down effect, as stated by respondent 5 (09 January 2012):

*“I maintain that they be empowered, as women are the backbone of the household’s livelihood; a woman takes care of the husband and the children. What I know is that if a woman is economically well-off, the family members will be well fed, they will be clothed and kept healthy, not to forget the household in general”.*

This concurred with the view of another respondent:

*“Women are the ones in the country who are willing to work harder than men. These days they are the ones supporting and maintaining families. They are engaged in the up-bringing and nurturing of the future generations. Women can withstand the challenges of employment like low wages, while men have been used to mining work and when they are retrenched, it is like they have been brainwashed and are clueless of what they should do to earn a living. They cannot face many challenges. They cannot be innovative like women. Men are always ashamed to take their produce to the market; this seems embarrassing for them, which is not the case for women. All in all, I do believe that economic empowerment can work best for women”.* Respondent 3 (06 January 2012).

The benefits of WEE as respondents affirmed, were likely to be reaped by all household members regardless of whether the weavers were from MHH or FHH.

All women either from a MHH or FHH affirmed that if women were to be economically empowered, they should not be financially reliant on men. Their dependence on men’s finances at any age, inhibits their self-sufficiency and consequently hampers the process of economic empowerment, hence a need for intervention. Four of these participants had already declared that the inconsistent sending of remittances became a push factor for their participation in these projects, as one stated:

*“I then decided to be in the project so to earn some income for my needs as my husband was no longer working, although he had never offered me part of his wage ever since his working days. When women are empowered, they ensure that their families are well organised, they cater for the children and other family members. When men are economically empowered, their drawback is that of a tendency to spend all their finances on other women (personal needs) and later come back to fight with their wife. Do you see how they are?”* Respondent 2 (05 January 2012).

When asked to mention specific things that can be observed when a woman is empowered, there was a variation in responses, but among these, the main ones were the ability to satisfy the basic needs and the process of establishing a business in the effort to strive for financial independence. When asked if this is the case when a man is empowered, one respondent said:

*“A man totally forgets about all these. This is why Basotho have a saying that a paternal orphan is never impoverished (as the mother can provide for this orphan as if the father was still alive). This is why you can observe that: if a mother dies, a family is ruined while the father might still be earning a lot of cash. No matter whether he is a minister or not, the future of his children can be ruined as they can become insecure and vulnerable in their mother’s absence. This happens because he is now paying attention to other women to the detriment of the welfare of his children. If the husband passes away, a woman works hard and never neglects her household”.* Respondent 6 (01 February 2012).

Of all these respondents, three related WEE with the ability to proceed from affording the basic needs for the household to that of being in a position to establish an enterprise for accumulation. This was the perspective of younger women in the sample, although two of them were from FHH households with multiple income earners, and the other one was from a MHH household with multiple income earners.

The effects of financial dependence of a woman on a man can be debilitating for WEE. This has been confirmed by one respondent who stated that when women earn meagerly:

*“They face real problems, subordination and many problems. Some are oppressed by their partners while some have been abandoned by their partners”.* Respondent 8 (17 January 2012).

Basically, all of the participants advocated for WEE, asserting that it is high time the position of women in the country be improved for the following facts, as one said:

*“It is because women have always been subordinated to men’s oppression such that men have always dominated all aspects of life. Men are always called the heads of the families even where women are responsible. Therefore, if women can be empowered economically, things can change for the better”.* Respondent 13 (31 January 2012).

There was only one woman who declared that her wage is spent on satisfying her needs, although it was inadequate for satisfying them all. The husband has to satisfy those of the household, as stated by respondent 9 (17 January 2012):

*“Sometimes I just get satisfied by the fact that I am able to pay fees for my child and buy a few items for myself as I get a small wage. When it comes to the household needs, it is my husband who deals with them”.*

Basically, it was not all the women who were aware of the prevalence of gender inequality and its disempowering capacity for women, as well as the efforts of actors of empowerment of women. This is accentuated by some responses from interviewees, as one respondent stated:

*“I do not see anybody who is working successfully towards empowerment of women. Except for the workshops that we have recently attended; these workshops empower us as we are counselled. These sessions have been eye-openers in terms of our being oppressed, as it never rung in our minds. We thought it was important for us to be in such a position, it is only recently that we are realising that subordination is bad. It is not easy for a housewife at home to realise that she is being oppressed. You only realise it clearly when you work, that some practices are to your disadvantage”.* Respondent 1 (05 January 2012).

None of the respondents at Setsoto depicted that they had recently attended workshops in relation to gender equality in the country, as one of them stated that it is necessary for women to attend such informative sessions.

## **5.8 Impacts of women’s experiences on prospective policy formulation.**

Experience of the women working in the weaving projects is diverse and characterised by complexities that challenge the aims and objectives of these projects.

### **5.8.1 Marketing environment**

The study identified that the fundamental aspect of consideration is the nature of the market prevalent for these projects, as the locals do not patronise the projects as much as the international patrons. This was in response to the specific aspects that women wanted to change in their projects so to improve the impacts of such projects. With reference to their assertions it

can be learned that their perception of the market is its inability to cater for their needs as producers.

According to the management of both projects, the projects might not to be empowering because respective ministries were not engendering relevant markets for these projects. These were the Ministry of Tourism which was not maximising the efforts to attract additional tourists into the country, and the Ministry of Trade which did not provide requisite support to projects of this nature, as indicated:

*“The market is not always reliable and it is the greatest problem that we have. The system itself is not encouraging tourism, so the inflow of tourists into the country is very low and these are the people we rely on, so this is the main problem. Again, any time the ministry of tourism is looking for items to give out as gifts or for display; they just come and take from here. We are never considered when they are taking part in shows outside the country. When government ministries want quality products, they all come here. We are number one on the list but we do not get that essential support”*. Respondent 14 (06 February 2012).

The Ministry of Trade is not responding to the needs of the projects like these ones. Some women asserted that the ministry is shying away from the fact that there are no good markets and one of its tasks is to ensure the existence of such markets. One of the respondents stated:

*“What I think should change for the better is mainly the market. When we have bought mohair and woven some items for sales it is necessary for us to have a reliable and sufficient market, but if it is not there, our business will not empower us. What I think is necessary is for the government to organise a reliable market for us, so to enable us to deal with our challenges”*. Respondent 5 (09 January 2012).

Generally, the marketing environment in the country has not encouraged the evolution of projects which are of craft nature, as affirmed by the respondents.

### **5.8.2 Gender and equality policies**

When investigating the practicability of some of the policies that have been put into place in the country, with the purpose of striving for gender equality, most women in both projects stipulated that this has only benefited a few women in the urban localities. The rest of the women are still

victims of masculine bias that impede their efforts to benefit from gender equality hence their being economically empowered. Some women in both projects affirmed that they have hardly heard of such policies, therefore they were not in a position to verify their benefits for women in the country. Box 5.1 shows the view of one respondent who acknowledged a change in her life time in terms of gender equality and empowerment.

**Box 5.1: Gender equality and empowerment changes**

“There is a change because when I refer to my situation, to be more specific, I did not acquire education on the grounds of the domination that my father had in his household. It is a very sad story. You can understand what it felt like when my father said proudly that he was not going to send me to school. My mother was still there; but she was not even allowed to work, as women were not allowed to leave their households and children so to be at workplaces. It was even worse for women in the rural areas who could not sell products in the market, which could be possible for women in towns. The rationale behind this is that my elderly sister fell pregnant after completing her high school studies. Was that a valid reason for not sending me to school? I do not think so. According to my father, it was not worthwhile to educate a girl child as it was likely for girls to be out of control. I do not think this can happen in the present era, I do believe that a child can even present such a case to the appropriate legal officials for protection of their rights”. Respondent 9 (17 January 2012).

## **5.9 Conclusion**

All in all, it was declared by respondents that the projects and their capability to employ unskilled women are generally neglected. Basically, the nature of the markets proved to be unfavourable for both projects and thus impacting negatively on the economic progress of the project and consequently on that of women. From the economic point of view, shortage and importation of raw materials inhibit the ability of the projects to empower the workers. The suggested interventions by the participants in the study called for increased political will for making the markets work for the poor. Nonetheless, the mode of remuneration for the workers also rendered them incapable of affording their needs as the meager wages fluctuated and their receipt was inconsistent.

Regarding the socio-cultural perspective and its impacts on WEE, the study portrayed that most cultural practices marginalised women and inhibited the efforts of the projects to empower them. Inability to put resources like land and livestock in the hands of women impeded their ability to accumulate and cater for their households' needs. It was alleged by the management of these projects that even the disabled could be incorporated as weavers. It is also believed that if the economic potentials of the projects could be prioritised and unleashed, more women could be empowered economically and poverty would in due course be reduced.

## CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of women's experiences of economic empowerment projects with special reference to those participating in Teya-teyaneng craft projects of Berea. The presentation relates pertinent findings to the detailed insights of literature reviewed in an attempt to respond to relevant research questions. The chapter is divided into four sections. First, it focuses on understanding and engaging with concepts of economic empowerment. Second is the conducive micro and macro-economic environment for WEE. Third is the improvement of socio-cultural scenario for women and lastly, WEE and poverty reduction.

Participation of women in income-generating projects has proved to be one of the essential ingredients for empowerment of women economically. The findings of this study correlate with many of the insights reviewed in the literature (see Chapter 2). It is suggested in the analysis that follows that the findings of women's experiences of the economic empowerment project in Teya-teyaneng crafts of Berea do not deviate much from experiences of other women at global level, especially in patriarchal and patrimonial societies like that of Lesotho. Nevertheless, the results from field work still suggested that a measure of economic empowerment of women had resulted from the interplay between socio-cultural, political and economic factors in the project environment.

### 6.2 Understanding and engaging with concepts of economic empowerment

The intertwined nature of empowerment has blurred attempts to treat political, social or economic empowerment in overt isolation. It is in this regard that Eyben *et al.*, (2008); ADF (2008); Alsop and Heinsohn (2005); Kabeer (1999); Beteta (2006); and Cornwall and Edwards (2010) view empowerment as a process<sup>4</sup> which combines two elements: firstly, that dealing with

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<sup>4</sup> A document detailing empowerment by Batliwala (2007: 560) defines it as "...a process that shifts social power in three categorical ways: by challenging the ideologies that justify social inequality (such as gender or caste), by challenging patterns of access to control over economic, natural and intellectual resources, and by transforming the institutions and structures that reinforce and sustain existing power structures (such as family, state, market, education and media)".

innate power to modify prospects for action so as to unleash potentials, and secondly combining power together with others to make choices that can be turned into outcomes. The research findings presented in this report suggested very strongly that women in strong patriarchal systems with limited generalized empowerment tend to set their targets of empowerment quite low, though they were self-reflective about the limitations of the frameworks they adopted (see 5.4). Generally, women equated economic empowerment to satisfaction of basic needs or a way out of chronic poverty with little consideration of relative poverty and asset poverty. Perhaps, prior exposure and enlightenment pertaining to WEE could have influenced their perception of the concept or their ability to adopt its contemporary approaches. It is definitely worth stating that data collected revealed significant discrepancies relating to the nature of management of the projects and their day-to-day operations. These are some of the underlying entities that can be viewed to be having latent influence on perceptions about empowerment and efforts to strive for it.

Nonetheless, their validation of the significance of the concept in development coincided with its definition in the work of (Eyben *et al.*, 2008: 10) that “.....economic empowerment means people thinking beyond immediate survival needs and thus able to recognise and exercise agency and choice” (see 5.7.2). Despite construed institutions that dictate routes for empowerment; these women have actively strived to carve out empowerment for themselves in their own ways, which is supportive of empowerment process. A predominant feature of their empowerment, specifically for those at Elelloang Basali project; is swapping of managerial positions amongst weavers. This was geared towards acquisition of managerial skills that can enhance their ability to make choices in life. They are under no illusion that there is much work to be done but do seem to feel that the step they have taken could influence the journey of others. Women did not perceive mere participation in craft projects as empowerment, and that they were conscious of the fact that more meaningful participation in the project processes allows for intensification of empowerment. This was the perception that apparently instigated their rearrangement from a sole entrepreneurship to a co-operative, and thus harmonising with the assertion of Karlekar (2004) and DTI (2011).

## 6.3 Conducive macro and micro-economic environment for economic empowerment

### 6.3.1 Intra-project development

Participation in income-generating projects in the informal economy like crafts, as the literature posits, is gendered as it has always been a tool for mapping a route out of poverty for women (Kabeer, 2003). Nearly two-thirds of working women in the LDCs are in insecure jobs, as agricultural labourers, in the care economy, working in industries or in domestic work (GENDERNET, 2011). Feminisation of this precarious second-hand economy is prominent in the labour sector in developing countries and renders women poorer than their male counterparts (Chant *et al.*, 2004; Esplen and Brody, 2007). The findings were indicative of this feminisation of labour as craft projects in Berea have always been a sphere of unskilled women, as is the case of women elsewhere in the region (SADC, 2005). Perhaps one can conclude that craft work is of gendered nature and women have been participants since its evolution in the country. This has been the case in some places although with minute variations. Acharya and Lund (2002) pointed out that craft labour was provided more by women, although there were some men in the craft business.

The study showed that women worked long hours in the effort to finish woven mats, so as to acquire earnings thereafter. The piece-rate<sup>5</sup> mode of determining their earnings also disadvantaged them. This is associated with the assertions of BOS (2008) that for those in the informal economy in Lesotho, like elsewhere; crafters have long working hours, low wages and are mostly females. This prevails for the fact that women are likely to accept lower wages than men (Esplen and Brody, 2007) as was also stated by one respondent (**see 5.7.2**). Women in the craft projects, like those in other IGP within patriarchal systems<sup>6</sup>, earn meagerly, thereby incapacitating them to generate the collateral needed for accessing credit, and thus exposing

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<sup>5</sup> Acharya and Lund (2002: 207) also show that "...female headed tiny business units and piece-rate workers are experiencing the stressful consequences of stagnation of payments....and this can create a gap between profit-makers and workers". It is worth noting that the piece-rate workers of both projects were faced with the stagnation of payments. However, the gap between profit-makers and workers was likely to be prominent at Setsoto Design and not at Elleloang Basali due to the diversity of the nature of management.

<sup>6</sup> The work of women is highly linked with patriarchy and discrimination of gender relations in a place, as depicted by cultural constraints faced by Mami, a craft businesswoman in India, whose access to a bank loan for her business was halted by her brother's unwillingness to recommend her for such, as a prerequisite by the bank (*ibid.*).

them to informal financial institutions charging exorbitant interests (SADC, 2005). Additionally, weavers just like other wage workers in the informal economy have been marginalised by the economic recession. The findings of the WIEGO (2010) study on the impact of the global economic crisis on informal workers, confirms that informal workers, just like their formal counterparts, are negatively affected by dwindling demand and price oscillations.

### **6.3.2 Making markets work for the poor**

At macro level, the study revealed that institutions and markets are not operating in such a manner that they enhance the prosperity of craft projects in the country. This has debilitating effects for economic stability of the projects and for sustainability of livelihoods for women's households. Suich and Murphy (2002) attest that craft projects usually do not have personnel proficient with marketing strategies.

Drawing from experiences of countries like India; it can be learned that the government has often supported training and entrepreneurship improvement of projects, especially those in weaving, for empowering women (Singh *et al.*, 2008). For weaving to be a livelihood alternative, it often requires some fiscal backing and sufficient market as well as process and product support such as that related to design (*ibid.*). Maintenance of a sufficient market, for craft products has the potential to sustain these projects in the long run. This point is made very strongly by participants in this research in relation to the role of the market and the ability of the project to empower women economically.

## **6.4 Socio-cultural scenario for women**

### **6.4.1 Traditional practices and the economy**

Adherence to patriarchal practices persistent in the society impacted negatively on women's economic position as shown by the findings. In response to this, Mason (2005) argues that collective action can be employed to empower poor women. For the reason that empowerment is powerfully influenced by traditions, improving the capabilities and opportunities of every woman may be suitable, but may be unsuccessful in empowering them, provided the immediate culture is left uncontested (*ibid.*). This resonates with the findings of the study in regard to the practice of women exclusively, of being in mourning attire when bereaved. The practice is

accompanied by stringent orders for portrayal of respect for the deceased spouse or child; for instance, one cannot arrive home after sunset. This was seen to be perpetuating subordination of women and viewed to possess a diminishing effect on the returns from any economic activity women engage in (see 5.6.5).

Despite the fact that a project might present opportunities for women to participate in, structural constriction may hinder their involvement as their empowerment is also determined by social, cultural, political and economic set up of spaces for women (Maneja, 2002). Moreover, participating in IGP does not necessarily imply economic autonomy of women for decision-making at household level. It was realised that women in Female Headed Households (FHH) were the ones who had full control of their financial resources as opposed to those in Male Headed Households (MHH). The findings declared that the efforts of the project to empower women were halted by the burden emanating from the social perspective, as the women had additional responsibilities to shoulder in their households (see 5.6.5).

#### **6.4.2 Paid work and unpaid work for women**

The research reflected a persistence of patriarchal control in Lesotho, which has been socially construed to instill household relationships and practices that are gendered to the detriment of women and girl children. This conforms to research findings affirming that universally unpaid work performed by women. Women did agricultural work, collected wood and water and performed household chores for no pay (Antonopoulos, 2009; Banerjee *et al.*, 2006; Heintz, 2009; Jacobsen, 2007). This has added a burden for women in paid work as those participating in the craft projects declared that they were bound to wake up early in the morning everyday to perform these chores before going to the projects. It was further discovered that in the evening women rush home to do some chores and gardening activities that they could not accomplish in the morning. This augmented on their existent burdens as Moser (1989) in Arku and Arku (2011) affirms.

The study discovered that there was no economic value attached to these chores. However Himmelweit (2002) states that unpaid work and paid work complement each other, but policy-formulation should avoid bias in their address. It would be unaffordable for those participating in craft projects to have paid household labour substituting them. Migration of men in search of

paid work has also led to making provision of unrewarded labour the responsibility of women exclusively (Elson, 2000). The findings also showed that women in Lesotho were not allowed by their spouses to be in paid work while the husbands were in South African mines and often they were only allowed to look after the children at home. Women became de facto household heads dependent on remittances and agricultural produce. It was only upon the death of the spouse that the respondent had to fend for the household's livelihood (see 5.1.2).

Internationally modeled projections illustrate that if the care economy was allotted an economic value it would amount to something between 10 and 39 percent of GDP (UNRISD, 2010). However, the contentious part of this whole idea is that men would still maintain their power over decision-making pertaining to agricultural production especially in many African countries like Zimbabwe as Elson (2000) exemplify. This typifies the case of women in Lesotho (Rosenberg, 2004; Gay, 1980), which is closely related to what the study found out in terms of who cared for and made decisions on land and livestock (see 5.6.5.1). Property was owned jointly but in practice men were in control as they made decisions on the proceeds from land and livestock. It is therefore evident that men benefit economically from unpaid work performed by women.

#### **6.4.3 Resources allocation, livelihoods and WEE**

Women in craft projects in Lesotho, like others elsewhere in the continent, have persistently suffered denial of access and control of land and related resources (Ravinder & Narayana, 2007; APF, 2007; Maneja, 2002; UNDP Lesotho, 2006). Proceeding from this point, an individual raised a concern of whether women in Lesotho are really being empowered or not and thus lamented: "...It is my hope that one day we will be able to build a society that clearly distinguishes between women empowerment and women abuse. That will be a society in which women will be given opportunities to grow, learn and manage without having to offer anything in return" (*Lesotho Times*, 2011). The implication is that women should be given access to productive resources for them to proceed beyond mere provision of household livelihoods sustainability to proceeds accumulation and economic progression. However, the project cases reveal that even a project like Elelloang Basali, where empowerment of women is core to what is done; it does not necessarily meet the criteria of being an effective WEE project. This might be because such projects were often designed to help sustain livelihoods and such looked to secure

some income and skills for women to mitigate risks against possible shocks. SLA has been criticised for not effectively tackling relationships of power on society which WEE would seek to try and impact on<sup>7</sup>.

#### **6.4.4 Access and control of land and livestock**

Research shows that the state has not exerted convincing force for advancement of women's state of affairs as in practice there is rigid adherence to Basotho customs and laws that marginalise women (Mapetla, 1999; UNDP Lesotho, 2006). This is based on the insights of the study which showed that acquisition and control of land still remained a hassle, and these resources were in control of men especially in the MHH. Documents for these resources were in the names of husbands and seldom in the wives' names upon the death of their spouses (**See 5.6.5.1**).

It was revealed that for women who were not married, access to land allocated by traditional leaders was nearly impossible. It was better for such women to have a male household member negotiating for land on their behalf. The same applies for inheritance of these resources and property. Male children, especially the elderly son, inherited property following the patrimonial practices. In response to this the government instigated among others, the lower income housing schemes in the urban areas (Mapetla, 1999) and the enactment of the 2006 Land Law. However, it was discovered that the scheme was unaffordable for women in craft projects as their incomes could not meet its expenses. On the other hand, the benefits of the Land Law are far-fetched for women at grassroots level in the country, with special reference to, among others, its stipulation of derivative right to occupy land.

The unique feature discovered in this study was the ability of Elelloang Basali project to sustain livelihoods of working women, livelihoods of the children of the deceased members and future generations (**see 5.7**). This fits well into the sustainable livelihoods framework as Chambers and Conway (1992), de Satge (2002), Scoones (2009) and Twigg, (2001) postulate. This framework, according to Haidar (2009), is utilised for assessing development projects that are geared towards empowerment of poor women. It is in this regard that the DFID livelihoods framework stands

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<sup>7</sup> See Krantz (2001) and Haidar (2009).

out to be the most appropriate as it evaluates ongoing projects in an attempt to examine its opportunities and constraints at micro and macro level (Krantz, 2001). The objectives of these projects are well suited to those of GAD as it purports to eliminate economic, political and social differences between men and women, so to attain people-centered development (de Satge, 2002; UNDP Lesotho, 2006).

## **6.5 WEE and poverty reduction**

### **6.5.1 Participation in income generating projects and WEE**

The profiles of participants in the craft projects are indicative of the calibre of women reliant on craft projects in the country, and this depicts the features of informal economy in most LDCs. Almost all of them possessed nothing more than primary education qualifications, compelling them to be only employable in projects that would offer them some training. This relates to the attestation of Yadav *et al.*, (2008) that one requires equipment and little training for creativity in weaving. The views of participants in this study were indicative of the fact that they were not skilled and unemployable elsewhere to sustain their households, except in these projects.

Drawing from Karl (1995), participation is important for empowering women and shaping advancement policies and schemes that are for the masses, and not for increasing their numbers in a project. This was the case with Elelloang Basali project as women in this project decided to be in their own co-operative. It was here that they were able to formulate policies that suited their situation deriving from their past experiences while in projects preceding theirs. It was found that their case also suited the assertion of Osorio-Cortes and Ziswiler (2009) that participation is linked to control, the sources of authority and day-to-day running of a scheme (**see 5.1.3**). This was contrary to the case of participants at Setsoto Design as their project was not controlled and run by women themselves.

However, it is crucial to note that women's participation in development projects as Maneja (2002) shows may duplicate current arrangement and disparities or indirectly show modification in the framework. In the effort to comprehend empowerment, it is necessary for women to give their motives for participating in projects, as participation does not necessarily imply empowerment (*ibid.*). Not all the women participating in both projects declared that the projects were empowering them. Although the findings indicated that empowerment generally implied

the ability to afford the basic needs for sustainability of households for most of the participants, it was however discovered that the projects were not empowering most of the participants. The projects failed to significantly increase their personal income such that they could spend beyond the basics or save and assure financial security (see 5.6.4).

The results indicated that the projects could have empowered the participants if they had employed the WEE strategies. These are inclusive of, among others, "...increasing the number of women who manage, own and control enterprises and productive assets, develop human resources and skills" (DTI, 2011: 67). Apparently, this is what Elelloang Basali project was striving for through the formation of a co-operative owned and managed by the women themselves. The project also enhanced their skills as they swapped managerial positions (see 5.3.1). The efforts of Setsoto Design project to empower women participants remain challenged by the fact that most women were merely participants who did not own and control the project.

The study has identified the issues of participation on development projects as being important for how women might engage with processes of economic empowerment in the limited confines of a craft project nested within a patriarchal society. It ultimately highlighted that "...effective participation depends much on how people make use of what is on offer, as well as on supportive processes that can help build capacity, nurture voice and enable people to empower themselves" (Cornwall, 2008: 275). This has also made it possible to acknowledge the distinction between invited spaces<sup>8</sup> and created spaces<sup>9</sup> for participation. It can therefore be deduced that the context of Setsoto Design related more to invited spaces and created spaces for those at Elelloang Basali.

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<sup>8</sup> "Invited spaces and opportunities to participate that are made available by community development workers - whether in response to statutory obligations or their own initiative - are often structured and owned by those who provide them, no matter how participatory they may seek to be" (Cornwall, 2008: 275).

<sup>9</sup> "Spaces that people create for themselves, whether networks of neighbours or people who work together, women's groups or larger and more complex social movements, have an entirely different character from most invited spaces. Most commonly they consist of people who come together because they have something in common, rather than because they represent different stakeholders or they represent different points of view. These kinds of spaces can be essential for groups with little power or voice in society, as sites in which they can gain confidence and skills, develop their arguments and gain from the solidarity and support that being part of the group can offer " (Cornwall, 2008: 275).

Contentious as WEE might be, a significant body of literature indicates that it is a process aimed at transforming gender bias and equipping women with skills and resources for development and decision-making (DTI, 2011; UNDP, 2008). It is worth noting that WEE yields best results when those initiating empowerment projects even lead them, as is also posited by Karlekar (2004). This relates to the findings of this study where women at Elelloang Basali established and managed the project themselves, making it possible for them to reap more benefits when the economy was pro-cyclical and headed for empowerment prior to 2008 economic recession. On contrary, women at Setsoto design participated in the project that was under the auspices of a sole proprietor and this complicated their empowerment process.

Crafts create job opportunities and enable women to generate income for their households, as was the case for those in Caprivi (Suich and Murphy, 2002; Wood, 2011). Crafts can counteract counter-cyclicity in the economy as they employ unskilled women who would otherwise remain unemployed. This is associated with what was revealed by the findings that participants in both projects ultimately got to be employed in these craft projects in the midst of persistent unemployment in the country. Though it must be appreciated that craft work is not merely for financial gain for participants (in fact, it often falls short on this), but these projects also create spaces for conservation of diverse art in societies (ibid.), as well as for mutually reinforcing support networks between women. This is related to the claim of one respondent as a motive for participating in Setsoto Design project (see 5.1.2). Nonetheless, it remains realistic that including women in income-generating projects does help to sustain their economic empowerment or at least opens up some opportunities in this regard (Moyle, Dollard and Biswas, 2006).

### **6.5.2 Benefits of WEE at household level**

It is fundamental for any society, especially in the LDCs, to attain economic growth, as failure to do so manifests in amongst others, escalating unemployment rates and unrelenting poverty. Basically, empowering women economically yields constructively for human development of the entire household and the community at large (Mahanta, 2008). This is crucial for the reason that poverty is one phenomenon that is gendered hence augmenting on Blumberg's (2005) assertion that; if WEE is a factual tactic for promoting gender impartiality and development, then increasingly more women are to benefit. The empirical significance is that the benefits tend to reach women's entire households (see 5.7). The findings of the study pertaining to the motive for

participation of women in craft projects for income generation showed that women mainly intended to earn income that would enable them to satisfy their households' needs. The reality was disclosed that most of them were not in a position to spend on their personal needs and sacrifice those of their households.

Feminist economics postulates that, in families where women are income earners, the economic status of the whole family is likely to improve, as women are more likely to spend on the immediate family needs as opposed to families where income generators are men (Blumberg, 2005; Chant, 1999; Mahanta, 2008; Mehra, 1997; Mosedale, 2003). Therefore, WEE should be buttressed in the effort to counteract gendered poverty that is resultant from escalating statistics of FHH in the district and the country as a whole. The rates of FHH in the Southern African region hover around 34 percent (Urdang, 2006). The study by Posel and Rogan (2009) in South Africa on women, income and poverty<sup>10</sup>, also affirmed this. This research reaffirmed similar findings to this; in that, 60 percent of participants in Teya-teyaneng craft projects of Berea resided in FHH and were mostly sustained by income of the weaver as the sole income earner, rendering such households poorer than MHH (**see 5.6.3**). Basically, the benefits of women's economic empowerment trickle down to most of their relatives. In the effort to justify empowerment of women economically, the results indicated that when women are empowered the entire household is entitled to the benefits.

### **6.5.3 Affirming links between WEE and poverty reduction**

What has motivated WEE globally is the recognition that it is one potential tool for poverty reduction as projects intended for WEE are attributed to be the most effective programmes for poverty reduction (Osorio-Cortes and Ziswiler, 2009; Suich and Murphy, 2002; Eyben *et al.*, 2008) (**See 5.4**). A widely accepted declaration is that promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women, is essential to achieving human development, poverty eradication and economic growth (ADF, 2008; UNDP, 2008). The third Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3) was also motivated by these and other related assertions. The study

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<sup>10</sup> "As in other countries, female-headship is on the rise in South Africa;... from 35.2 percent in 1997 to 37.5 percent in 2006;...and households headed by women are far more likely to be poor than households headed by men. This is because these households are more reliant on income received by women" (Posel, D & Rogan, M., 2009: 31-33).

showed that there are economic and social aspects that pose a challenge for the projects to empower women economically. However, most participants indicated that they appreciated the efforts of the projects to sustain their households as their economic conditions were uplifted in comparison to those of unemployed women (see 5.5).

WEE is also related to a decrease in Total Fertility Rates (TFR). Such declines are likely to counteract the effects of population momentum and poverty for those in resource-deficient regions. However, WEE is enhanced by increment of women's incomes such that it lands above the level of subsistence (Blumberg, 2005). Blumberg's assertion relates directly to the lamentations of participants in relation to the aspects that called for requisite intervention for the projects to empower women economically. Economic independence Urdang (2006); Kabeer (1999) is fundamental for WEE; as resource deficiency is associated with disempowerment and poverty (see 5.7.2). It can be deduced from the study that empowerment yields positively for lessening poverty as Khan and Bibi (2011) state.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study revealed that challenges of women empowerment in Teya-teyaneng craft projects of Berea in Lesotho are indicative of dire need for advancement of women's control of productive resources. Moreover, laws that relate to cultural values and practices should be restructured as they tend to prejudice and marginalise women (Lesotho MDG Report, 2008). The emphasis is on women ownership of enterprises for empowerment to take-off, as failure to do so, can consequentially perpetuate the ongoing bias and subordination of women in economic and social systems. Apparently, the findings indicated that women participating in the projects prioritized security of livelihoods over their empowerment. This can be viewed as one of the socially accustomed reactions of women in Lesotho.

Conversely, even when women strive to administer the project which further enhances economic empowerment, they are limited by socio-cultural factors. Women, for instance, are required to perform unpaid household work which limits the degree to which they participate in the projects and to which they can strengthen empowerment. They have been deprived of rights to control resources, especially women in MHH. Lack of skills and low standards of education have complicated empowerment efforts of these women. Nevertheless, they have persistently

attempted to empower themselves, and by virtue of being collective members of the project, it became possible for them to partake in fund raising associations. Some women have even attended workshops locally and internationally that have empowered them.

## **CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This section serves to present both recommendations and conclusion emanating from the research findings. This dissertation set out to discuss research findings relating to women economic empowerment (WEE) in Lesotho craft projects. This entailed exploration of factors influencing participation and non-participation in Income Generating Projects (IGP), perception of WEE by women and those managing the projects. Furthermore, impediments of projects to empower women and how the experiences informed policy were also examined.

### **7.2 Income generating projects and economic empowerment**

The study adopted a qualitative approach, employing an informative case to provide detailed perceptive that could be locally and globally applicable. A research of this nature, highly influenced by feminism, affirmed that in-depth interviews of a face-to-face nature are crucial for comprehension of women's individuality and capacities (Nussbaum, 2000 in Acharya and Lund, 2002). Respondents were always interviewed in the evening after a long working day, but managed to engage in the sessions as much as they could. The views of key informants and other participants in both craft projects were collected and analysed. Primary and secondary data collected circulated around the opportunities and constraints of WEE for women in IGP.

The findings of the study depicted several issues pertaining to women's experiences of economic empowerment projects. Though the data collected was voluminous, what could be learnt from it was that most of the impediments for the projects to empower women economically were socio-cultural in nature. However, there were variations in terms of the project potential to empower women. In the case of Setsoto Design, more needs to be done in the effort to adhere to the principles of empowerment<sup>11</sup>. On contrary, participants at Elelloang Basali declared to be in full control of the project hence its ability to empower them to a limited degree, from the period of its initiation up to the advent of the global economic turmoil.

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<sup>11</sup> Adherence to some of the strategies suggested by DTI (2011) would yield positively for WEE and these are inclusive of increasing the number of women who manage, control and own productive assets and businesses of any form.

### **7.3 Recommendations for intra-project developments**

In an individual project there has to be a review of a number of endogenous factors that contribute towards the nature of the project, specifically daily operations and management of the projects. This can in a way turn out to be a solution for recruitment complexities faced by these projects, not to mention the welfare of the workers. Results therefore indicated calls for reform on the side of project management; there is a dire need to advance the mode of remuneration and working conditions. Women's perceptions of economic empowerment indicated a dire need for dissemination of information through workshops, as it could be learnt that their awareness about this phenomenon was somehow limited.

Marketing strategies have to be varied for the woven materials to attract impressive sales that can ultimately allow management to improve the wages. Diversification in production can be considered by the projects, as it holds potential to lure customers, hence increasing demand for the products. Initiation of sturdy mechanisms for trade fairs can boost the state of craft projects. Products can be branded with an identity unique to this country as this can lure potential customers. Infrastructure and technology adopted should be in line with the projects' needs and ability to maintain them.

### **7.4 National policy recommendations**

It is fundamental to declare that this research and other related works do not campaign for an entire upheaval of patriarchy, but aims at articulating a requisite for curtailment of gender inequalities in spaces and policy formulation (Acharya and Lund, 2002). Eventually, the success of any development entity to empower women hinges on intertwined public policy approaches that are prudently implemented and managed. All these draw heavily from fiscal and trade strategies. However, the question that was instigated by the entire research process is what the future of women in IGP is in terms of their economic empowerment in the era of persistent patriarchy and capitalism. The study therefore suggests a review of the feasibility of engendering gender equality, especially for women at grass roots.

The research findings suggested a need for the government to demonstrate swift attempts to improve the state of the market for these projects, which is for assurance of livelihoods of women's households. These involve review of marketing strategies for craft commodities by the

Ministry of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing (MTICM). In addition to this, approaches employed by the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) to attract tourists, hint a need for review as the reduced inflow had shortcomings for the craft sales and consequently for WEE. These suggestions coupled with women's experiences substantiate a need for government intervention, as lack of sufficient market demotivates weavers (Yadav *et al.*, 2008).

Considering establishment of institutions that are geared towards the supporting of craft producers on production and marketing of their designed items can be one alternative for boosting crafts and related IGP for attainment of WEE. A specially tailored plan to emulate what Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI)<sup>12</sup> does is of relevance for sustainability of craft projects in the country. Becoming a member of Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa (COFTA) could likely benefit women in craft projects and the rest of those in the informal economy in Lesotho. The Fair Trade Women Producers (WIEGO, 2010) run projects that allow women to voice their views through case studies and also focus on connecting small groups of women to export markets on reasonable terms. This relates to the argument that, production at micro level is outcompeted at macro level. Therefore, it can be beneficial to consider selective inclusion of small-scale producers into value chains on an international basis.

The findings indicated that the efforts of women to lift their households above abject poverty hinted policy formulation to consider tailoring of suitable means of social protection. These include a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) for mothers of school-going children in severe poverty, with the aim of placing some income in the hands of poor women (GENDERNET, 2011). This could reduce the burden shouldered by women earning meagerly. It could in a way contribute towards their empowerment.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

The findings of this research have shown that experiences of women in Lesotho participating in IGP do not deviate from those of women in other LDCs. Women in the projects aim at sustaining

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<sup>12</sup> CCDI helps craft producers in various ways in fitting them smoothly into the production and market chain and ensures networking of the producers, designers, marketing agents, trainers and related development agencies. These happen through product, business and market support programmes. <http://www.ccdi.org.za/>

their households' livelihoods, and thus viewing their economic transition beyond attainment of basic needs as something far-fetched. They participated in various ways for the projects' sustainability, however, the mode of remuneration, and the inability of the market to absorb their whole produce has relentlessly demotivated them. What impedes the efforts of these projects to empower them is that they are nested within strong patriarchal systems in the era of globalisation. It is essential for the projects to strive to enable women to progress from livelihoods sustainability to fulfillment of empowerment. However, the research findings showed that participation does not merely lead to WEE. It also elucidated that WEE for those in patriarchal societies is influenced by related entities operating in gendered spaces (DTI, 2011; Acharya and Lund, 2002). The findings validated that WEE is a potential tool for poverty reduction as affirmed by (UNDP, 2008; Eyben *et al.*, 2008; Khan and Bibi, 2011).

One area worth researching is the skewed role of intra-household distribution of money and non-money resources, as it was also identified as being partly linked with WEE. However, the scope of this research could not allow a full interrogation of such issues. This case study serves to indicate that there is still a need to research deeper into issues related to the lag of economic empowerment of women in Lesotho, with specific attention geared towards those participating in the incessantly expanding informal economy. This can be extended further to interrogate the experiences of women participants in the formal economy given the nature of social, political and economic institutions operating in Lesotho.

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## APPENDIX 1

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### (SESOTHO VERSION)

*(E baloa ke ea etsang lipatlisiso pele ho qaleho ea lipuisano. Kopi enngoe e sala le ea arabang lipotso, kopi enngoe e tekeneloa ke ea arabang lipotso e be e bolokoa ke ea lipatlisisong).*

Lebitso la ka ke Reboetsoe Rosemary Makoko (nomoro ea sekolong ke 210540199). Ke lipatlisisong tsa boithuto ho hlahloba lietsahala tsa morero o malebana le matlafalo ea bo 'Me moruong: ka ho khetholoha, bo 'Me ba mererong ea khohlo ea boea ea Teya-teyaneng seterekeng sa Berea. Boithuto bona bo hlahlojoa le ho tataisoa ke Monghali Glen Robbins oa Sekolo sa Lithuto tsa Nts'etsopele (Development Studies), Universtity ea KwaZulu-Natal.

Ke fumaneha mona:

School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban kapa nomorong ena: 0766637217 kapa (00266) 58866020 Email: [reboetsoemakoko@yahoo.com](mailto:reboetsoemakoko@yahoo.com) kapa [210540199@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:210540199@ukzn.ac.za)

Ke lebohaha u lumetse ho nka karolo boithutong bo na. Pele re qala ke kopa ho hlakisa hore:

-U nka karolo ka boithaopo

-U na le tokelo ea ho se arabe potso efe kapa efe

-U na le tokelo ea ho itokolla neng kappa neng.

Puisano tsena li tla bolokoa ka lekunutu le polokeho eohle hape li tla ba teng ho ba ele karolo ea puisano feela. Likaroloana tse ling tsa lipuisano tse na e tla ba karolo ea tlaleho ea moshoelella ea boithuto bona. U fana ka tumello sebakeng sa : (ts'oea e le nngoe ea khetho tse ka tlaase)

Lebitso la hau, boemo le mosebetsi	
Boemo le mosebetsi	
Mosebetsi kapa mofuta oa khoebo (u kupuoa ho hlakisa)	
Ha ho eo ke e khethang ho tse ka holimo	

Ho sebelisoa tlalehong ea boithuto?

Ka kopo tekana foromo ena ho bonts'a hore ke u baletse tsohle tsa eona.

..... (tekeno) .....(letsatsi)

..... (NGOLA LEBITSO)

Ngola aterese ka tlaase ha eba u lebeletse ho fumana kopi ea tlaleho ea lipatlisiso:

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### (ENGLISH VERSION)

*(To be read out by researcher before the beginning of the interview. One copy of the form to be left with the respondent; one copy to be signed by the respondent and kept by the researcher.)*

My name is Reboetsoe Rosemary Makoko (student number 210540199). I am doing research on examining women's experience of an economic empowerment project: A case study of women participants in Teya-teyaneng craft projects of Berea district. This study is supervised by Mr. Glen Robbins at the School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. My contact details are:

School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban or cell: 0766637217 or (00266) 58866020, Email: [reboetsoemakoko@yahoo.com](mailto:reboetsoemakoko@yahoo.com) or [210540199@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:210540199@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the project. Before we start I would like to emphasize that:

- your participation is entirely voluntary;
- you are free to refuse to answer any question;
- you are free to withdraw at any time.

The interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to members of the research team. Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final research report. Do you give your consent for: *(please tick one of the options below)*

Your name, position and organisation, or	
Your position and organisation, or	
Your organisation or type of organisation <i>(please specify)</i> , or	
None of the above	

to be used in the report?

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you.

----- (signed) ----- (date)

----- (print name)

Write your address below if you wish to receive a copy of the research report:

## **APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EMPLOYEES**

### Section A: Respondent profile

This is for acquisition of information necessary for identification of an individual interviewee.

1. What are your names?
2. How old are you?
3. What is the highest qualification that you have?
4. What is your marital status?
5. If married, are you still living with your spouse?
6. What is the occupation of your spouse?
7. How many children do you have?

### Section B: Household information

This is for obtaining requisite information about the make-up of the household and its members.

1. Who is the head of the household?
2. Who are the people in the household?
3. Do all the members reside in the household? If not why?
4. What is the occupation of each member of the household?

### Section C: Household income and assets

The researcher aims to attain and assess information on wealth and assets ownership and their control in an individual household.

1. What is your current employment status in and outside the household?
2. How do you allocate time to these activities?
3. Which, if any, of these are paid?
4. When were you last employed (if ever)?
5. How long did this last?
6. What were your monthly earnings from this?
7. Who contributes to the household income? And on what basis?
8. What is the source of their income?

9. Who makes what expenditure decisions in the household?
10. Are you saving part of your earnings? If not, why?
11. Who controls the savings of the household?
12. How does the household spend the total earnings?
13. Do you have land? If no, why?
14. How big is this land?
15. How is this land used?
16. Who owns and cares for it?
17. Is there any livestock owned by the household? If yes, which ones specifically?
18. Who is in control of this livestock?
19. If the livestock or its products are sold, who controls the income?

#### Section D: Women and the craft centre

The plan is to dig deeper in to experiences of women working in the craft centres in relation to their being economically empowered by these projects they are involved in.

1. When did you start working in this centre?
2. How did you hear about the project?
3. What did you understand was being offered in the project?
4. Have you participated in any schemes like this before? If so, why?
5. How did you get to participate in this project?
6. What was your motivation for participating in this project?
7. How have you participated in this project?
8. Did you feel your participation made an impact on how the project was run?
9. In what ways have your involvement in this project evolved over time?
10. Did the project improve your personal income?
11. How did you allocate the income between your own needs and those of the household?
12. How has your life been influenced by the project experiences?
13. What do you understand by economic empowerment?
14. Is economic empowerment relevant as a concept to women? If yes, how?
15. Do you find this project to be empowering you? If yes, in what way?
16. What is impeding the project from empowering you?

17. Is there anything that you want to change in this project so to improve its impact? If yes, in what ways?

#### Section E: Lesotho society

Here the societal context and issues about gender and empowerment are investigated with the aim of understanding factors that impact on women beyond the project.

1. How would you describe the position of women in Lesotho society?
2. How has this changed in your life time?
3. What are the most important challenges for women in your community?
4. What is being done about these challenges by women themselves and by other societal actors?

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MANAGEMENT**

#### Section A: Respondent profile

This is for acquisition of information necessary for identification of an individual interviewee.

8. What are your names?
9. How old are you?
10. What is the highest qualification that you have?
11. What is your occupational position in this project?
12. When did you occupy this position?

#### Section B

This section aims at attaining requisite information in relation to the profile of the project.

1. How many employees are there in this centre?
2. What is the duty of an individual employee?
3. What are the employment trends of the project?
4. What are the market trends locally and internationally?
5. Who is responsible for the entire running of this project?
6. Is the running of the project successful? If not, why?
7. What contributes towards the success of the project?
8. Are there factors that impede the success of the project?

### Section C: Project income and assets

The researcher aims to attain and assess information on wealth and assets ownership and their control for the project.

20. What is the current income status of the project?, from within and from outside the project?
21. What is the source of funding for this project?
22. When last did the project receive funds from outside sources?
23. What are the monthly profits generated by this project?
24. Who makes what expenditure decisions for this project?
25. Is part of the profit earned in the project being saved? If not, why?
26. Who controls the savings of this project?
27. How does the craft centre (project) spend the total income?
28. Does the project have its own land? If no, why?
29. How big is this land?
30. Does the project have its own capital goods? If not, why?

### Section D: Administrators and the craft centre

The plan is to dig deeper into experiences of women working in the craft centres in relation to their being economically empowered by the projects they are involved in.

18. How did you hear about this project?
19. What did you understand was being offered in the project?
20. Have you administered any schemes like this before? If so, why?
21. How did you get to be in administration of this project?
22. What was your motivation for administering this project?
23. Did you feel your participation made an impact on how the project was run?
24. In what ways has your involvement in this project evolved over time?
25. Did the project improve your personal income?
26. How has your life been influenced by the project experiences?
27. What do you understand by economic empowerment?

28. Is economic empowerment relevant as a concept to women? If yes, how?
29. Do you find this project to be empowering you? If yes, in what way?
30. What is impeding the project from empowering you?
31. Is there anything that you want to change in this project so to improve its impact? If yes, in what ways?

#### Section E: Lesotho society

Here the societal context and issues about gender and empowerment are investigated with the aim of understanding factors that impact on women beyond the project.

32. How would you describe the position of women in Lesotho society?
33. How has this changed in your lifetime?
34. What are the most important challenges for women in your community?
35. What is being done about these challenges by women themselves and by other societal actors?

### APPENDIX 3: The weaving process

1. Mohair is bought from local Basotho farmers, after which it is then carded and spun by the spinners



Mohair is sheared from goats



Mosotho woman holding spun mohair

2. Spinning is done using hand-made spinning wheels that employ an old bicycle wheel



3. When the spinning is done, the mohair is washed and dyed in the studio



4. When the mohair is dry, bobbins are prepared and they are woven on the wooden frames



5. A warp of cotton twine is laid and the design is placed behind the warp



A design is prepared

weaving goes on

Adapted from: Elelloang Basali Weavers. (2004). Africancraft.com.